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# THE RELIGIOUS QUEST OF INDIA

EDITED BY

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# EDITORIAL PREFACE

THE writers of this series of volumes on the variant forms of religious life in India are governed in their work by two impelling motives.

I. They endeavour to work in the sincere and sympathetic spirit of science. They desire to understand the perplexingly involved developments of thought and life in India and dispassionately to estimate their value. They recognize the futility of any such attempt to understand and evaluate, unless it is grounded in a thorough historical study of the phenomena investigated. In recognizing this fact they do no more than share what is common ground among all modern students of religion of any repute. But they also believe that it is necessary to set the practical side of each system in living relation to the beliefs and the literature, and that, in this regard, the close and direct contact which they have each had with Indian religious life ought to prove a source of valuable light. For, until a clear understanding has been gained of the practical influence exerted by the habits of worship, by the practice of the ascetic, devotional, or occult discipline, by the social organization and by the family system, the real impact of the faith upon the life of the individual and the community cannot be estimated; and, without the advantage of extended personal intercourse, a trustworthy account of the religious experience of a community can scarcely be achieved by even the most careful student.

II. They seek to set each form of Indian religion by the side of Christianity in such a way that the relationship may stand out clear. Jesus Christ has become to them the light of

all their seeing, and they believe Him destined to be the light of the world. They are persuaded that sooner or later the age-long quest of the Indian spirit for religious truth and power will find in Him at once its goal and a new starting-point, and they will be content if the preparation of this series contributes in the smallest degree to hasten this consummation. If there be readers to whom this motive is unwelcome, they may be reminded that no man approaches the study of a religion without religious convictions, either positive or negative: for both reader and writer, therefore, it is better that these should be explicitly stated at the outset. Moreover, even a complete lack of sympathy with the motive here acknowledged need not diminish a reader's interest in following an honest and careful attempt to bring the religions of India into comparison with the religion which to-day is their only possible rival, and to which they largely owe their present noticeable and significant revival.

It is possible that to some minds there may seem to be a measure of incompatibility between these two motives. The writers, however, feel otherwise. For them the second motive reinforces the first: for they have found that he who would lead others into a new faith must first of all understand the faith that is theirs already—understand it, moreover, sympathetically, with a mind quick to note not its weaknesses alone but that in it which has enabled it to survive and has given it its power over the hearts of those who profess it.

The duty of the Editors of the series is limited to seeing that the volumes are in general harmony with the principles here described. Each writer is alone responsible for the opinions expressed in his volume, whether in regard to Indian religions or to Christianity.

JAMES HOPE MOULTON

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THE RELIGIOUS QUEST OF INDIA

# THE TREASURE OF THE MAGI

## A STUDY OF MODERN ZOROASTRIANISM

BY

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OF

# WILLIAM RALPH OSBORN MOULTON,

SECOND LIEUTENANT IN THE MANCHESTER REGIMENT;
FORMERLY SCHOLAR OF KING'S COLLEGE,
AND WHEWELL UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR
IN INTERNATIONAL LAW.

HE GAVE HIS LIFE IN FRANCE
FOR THE RESTORATION OF THAT BROKEN FABRIC
THE PRINCIPLES OF WHICH HE WAS PLEDGED TO STUDY.

AUGUST 5, 1916

CỲN θεῷ

# FOREWORD

In the autumn of 1915, on the invitation of the Indian National Council of the Y.M.C.A., three scholars from England, Dr T. R. Glover of Cambridge, Dr James Hope Moulton of Manchester, and Professor George Hare Leonard of Bristol, went out to spend a year in India. The plan was that these men, who were distinguished alike for their writings and for their close contact with the student world, should spend this year in studying some of the problems of education and of religion in India, getting time for making friendships with Indians and at the same time doing some lecturing and writing. And whilst each was asked to travel for part of the time, in order to see something of India and to visit the Missions of his own communion, he was also invited to spend several months in a single community in order to have time for closer study and for the forming of closer friendships. It was hoped that books of considerable value might result from this close contact of English thinkers with the religious thought of India. All did excellent service by lecturing to mixed audiences in various centres, and by teaching groups of Christian students; and they were everywhere welcomed with the deep respect which scholarship meets in India, and with great cordiality. Even more significant than the interest which their lectures stirred up were the friendships which they made with Indians, and which they valued very greatly.

To Dr Moulton the invitation was full of attractiveness. He was always a Missionary enthusiast, and he was thrilled by the prospect of seeing the field for himself. For years he

had studied the religion of the Parsis, and now there opened out before him the opportunity of personal intercourse with them. Under ordinary conditions it would not have been possible to entertain the proposition, on account of other duties; but the war had so affected all theological colleges that a prolonged absence could be contemplated as not involving of necessity any serious interruption of his normal work. Moreover, coming as it did within a week after he had lost his wife, the invitation seemed to open out for him a course of service in a fresh field just at the time when service on the old field was bound to be so fraught with pain. When another heavy sorrow came to him while he was in India, in the death of his eldest son, who was killed at the front in France on the 4th of August, 1916, he continued to seek consolation in service and teaching, and he did not seek in vain. It is to his son that this volume is dedicated.

He had been invited to go to India largely that he might use his ripe Iranian scholarship in lecturing to the Parsis on Zoroastrianism, and he received from that community everywhere proofs of the warmest possible friendship and regard and of the keenest interest in his teaching. In Bombay they placed at his disposal a large theatre, and have since published his lectures in both English and Gujarati.

He remained some sixteen months in India and sailed from Karachi by the S.S. *City of Paris* for England. At Port Said he had the joy of meeting his friend Dr Rendel Harris, who had left England several months before in order to join Dr Moulton in India, but, having been torpedoed in the Mediterranean, had stayed on in Egypt instead of proceeding to India. The two friends sailed together and had a time of delightful intercourse until the steamer was sunk by a torpedo in the Gulf of Lions. Passengers and crew got into the boats. But the weather was very stormy, and the boat in which the

two scholars were was driven out of its course and did not reach the coast of Corsica until four days later. Of the twenty-five souls in the boat twelve had by that time died of exposure, and amongst them Dr Moulton.

The following paragraphs are from a letter written by Dr Harris to Dr Moulton's brother, the Rev. W. Fiddian Moulton of Derby, a few days after the tragic event:

I am not able to write a great deal, and much of what I would say must wait until I return, first of all because we were strongly advised not to communicate any details as to the passage of our unfortunate vessel, and second because it is too painful to recall in detail the horrors of the days of exposure and collapse. I think that what operated in his case to diminish his power of resistance was, first of all physical weakness, which had shown itself on the way home from India in a violent outbreak of boils on the face and neck causing him much pain and inconvenience, but on the other side he succumbed to superior spiritual attractions which he felt a long time before the ship was struck. He talked about his dear ones in Johannine language as going over to prepare places for one another, and the spiritual tension was evidently stronger than even the strong language expressed. Those on the other side stood to him Christ-wise, saying Christ's words and doing Christ's deeds to him as they had done to one another. Under these circumstances it is not strange that he should have collapsed, but he played a hero's part in the boat.

He toiled at the oar till sickness overcame him; he assisted to bale out the boat and to bury (is that the right word?) the bodies of those who fell. He said words of prayer over poor Indian sailors, and never never complained or lost heart for a moment through the whole of the three days and more of his patience, though the waves were often breaking over him and the water must have often been up to his middle. He passed away very rapidly at the end and was gone before I could get to him. His body was lying on the edge of the boat, and I kissed him for you all and said some words of love which he was past hearing outwardly. There was no opportunity to take from his body anything except his gold watch, and one or two trifles which are in my keeping. I could not search him for papers, indeed I doubt if he had brought any with him from the ship.

During the whole of the voyage his mind was marvellously alert and active. He talked, and read and wrote incessantly, and preached on the Sundays. On the way home he had read the whole of the *Odyssey* in the small Pickering edition, and amongst his first remarks to me was his opinion as to the disparity of the 23rd book with the rest of the poem.

One strange and beautiful experience we shared together with Major —— of the Abyssinian Embassy, who was returning to England. We developed literary sympathies, and one day the conversation turned on *Lycidas*. The Major knew it by heart—so did J. H. M., or almost by heart. I was a bad third in the recitation, and when we halted for a passage J. H. M. ran to his cabin and brought his pocket copy of Milton to verify doubtful words with. How little we suspected what was the meaning of our exercise! They laughed at my delight over the sounding sentences, and I had to explain that it made my blood tingle; but we did not know that the amber flow of that Elysian speech had become once more sacramental and that we were really reciting the liturgy of the dead, that 'Lycidas your sorrow is not dead, sunk though he be beneath the watery floor'. He had his own 'solemn troop' and his own 'sweet society' to make him welcome.

It is one of our Lord's sayings that one shall be taken and another shall be left, and the words lie dormant in meaning long spaces of time, then rise up and smite us in the face. Why was one taken and the other left? Why did 'that fatal', that 'perfidious bark' discriminate between the 'sacred dead' that it sunk low and the one which was so much whiter to the harvest? But for questions like these there is no answer yet. I would tell you more if I could, but this is all I can say at this present.

With deep sympathy,

Your friend and his,

RENDEL HARRIS.

In this book there is a passage, written by Dr Moulton only a few days before he left India, from which we may realize how he would wish us to think of his death:

> If our earthly life is only a testing and a training, we need not wonder why there are so many 'premature' withdrawals of bright and promising lives. God does not need the time we need to test a character, nor does He take our view of the importance of a post to which He has set us. Only He can know whether service here or service yonder is better for any individual for the supreme interests of His Kingdom.

At the time when he decided to go to India Dr Moulton agreed to prepare the volume which is herewith published. His Iranian studies had already given him all the scientific preparation required, while the experience he was about to have among Parsis would give him that intercourse with those

who profess Zoroastrianism which is required in order to fulfil the condition laid down for the volumes of this series in the second paragraph of the Editorial Preface. He took up the work with great eagerness, and thoroughly enjoyed the labour of preparing the manuscript. Since it would be necessary, as soon as he arrived in England, to take up work on the Lexicon of New Testament Greek which he was preparing in collaboration with Professor Milligan, he saw that it would be wise to complete the manuscript of *The Treasure of the Magi* before leaving India. This he did, and had three type-written copies prepared, one of which he sent by post to his brother in England before leaving India. Through this circumstance the publication of the volume has been made possible; for the original autograph lies at the bottom of the Mediterranean. The manuscript has been printed precisely as it left Dr Moulton's hands, with the exception of a few sentences which have been slightly modified by the Editors. Dr Moulton, in a letter written before he left India, had expressed a wish that this should be done.

We owe very great gratitude to the Right Reverend Dr Casartelli, Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford, for his extreme kindness in revising the proofs as only one could do who possessed his profound learning in Iranian subjects. Those who knew Dr Moulton will realize how much he would appreciate this further expression of a friendship which he valued very highly from a scholar of such great distinction.

J. N. Farquhar.
H. D. Griswold.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| *Ys.* | *Yasna.* |
| *Yt.* | *Yasht.* |
| *Vd., Vend.* | *Vendidad.* |
| *E. Z.* | *Early Zoroastrianism*, J. H. Moulton, London, 1913. |
| *E. R. P. P.* | *Early Religious Poetry of Persia*, J. H. Moulton, Cambridge, 1911. |
| *S. B. E.* | *Sacred Books of the East*, edited by F. Max Müller, Oxford, 1880–1887. |
| *E. R. E.* | *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by Dr. Hastings, Edinburgh, 1908 ff. |

# NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

The vowels have the 'Italian' value: *ə* is the Sanskrit *a* (as in sof*a*). Spirant *χ* and *γ* are heard in German do*ch*, Ta*g*e (dialectic); *θ* and *ð* in our bath and bathe; *ŋ* is our ng; *š*, *ž* as in *s*ure and a*z*ure; *č*, *ǰ* as in *ch*ur*ch* and *j*udge. For more exact definitions the student will go to the grammars.

# INTRODUCTION

## THE TREASURE OF THE MAGI

Then entered in those Wisemen three
Full reverently on bended knee,
And offered there in his presence
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.
Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel!
Born is the King of Israel.

*Old Carol.*

O Thou Wise Lord, who when Thy world was young
Didst pierce the grim night of the eastern sky
With gladsome rays of truth and purity,
Forgive the error of the venturous song
That strives to hymn Thy bounty. May my tongue
Tell of Thy Seer, and how against the Lie
Pure thoughts, pure words, pure actions' victory
Rang from his herald trumpet loud and long:

So from the blaze wherein Thy glories dwell
Once more athwart the sunless gloom a star
Shall flash its guiding message, and from far
The Sage of Iran answer to the spell,
And speed with trophies of a faith long dim
To find his Lord and bow the knee to Him.

J. H. M.

NINETEEN hundred years ago, according to a story that is lovingly repeated all over the world every Christmastide, a company of Eastern priests found the goal of a long journey in the Holy City. Far away in Media, it may be, as they watched the skies for tokens of the future which they believed to be written therein, they had seen a star their practised eyes discerned to be new. It was the Angel of some Great One newly born. In visions of the night it was expounded to

them that they should seek a King in Jerusalem and offer treasure in worship. Directed thence by the interpreters of prophecy, they set forth on the south road when the night fell; and the Star rose as they started, and moved to its low culmination, so that as they drew near to the hill on which was the City of David they saw it hang like a golden lamp over the place where their Saoshyant, the 'Future Saviour', lay. And so they entered in and did reverence before the manger, over which their eyes seemed to see that Glory that was lost when the first man sinned. They gave Him gifts of their own country's treasure. But it was not material gold and frankincense and myrrh that the angels saw as the Magi opened their caskets. They saw pure gold of a great Prophet's unshakable faith in God—the fragrant incense of his powerful prayer—the myrrh of self-denial and upward striving, that sought to provide an anodyne for the woes of men. And in this, the purest offering that the Gentile world had to give, they recognized a Divine manifestation that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him. So for those whose ears were open there burst forth afresh over those gifts the angels' song:

> Glory to God, in the highest and on earth;
> Peace among men in whom he is well pleased.

* * * * * * *

Nineteen hundred years ago—and still there are Magi ministering before the sacred fire, and chanting the same Hymns, that were hoary with antiquity even when their ancestors chanted them every sunrise as they travelled towards Bethlehem. But very few indeed, priests or people, have set foot on that pilgrim road. Like the Jews, though with more excuse, they missed their Saviour when He came, and languidly they look for another who may come some day. Forgetful of their Prophet, who longed to 'convert all living men' to his high views of God and of duty, they cling to caste privileges and a justifiable pride in their small, well-educated, generous and progressive community. But the gold

of pure faith is dim with incrustations of ceremonial, of Gnostic speculation and of materialist indifference to religion. The incense is stale, for the prayers of multitudes are in a tongue they cannot understand. The myrrh has only availed to dull the smart of sin. The Fire may burn, enthroned and crowned and venerated, in shrines that none but a born Parsi can enter; but where it should kindle in men's hearts it flickers and burns low. Yet the Treasure is there still, and when they shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away. We hear Zarathushtra's own voice calling upon his forgetful people to learn a New Song:

> See how from far upon the eastern road
> The Star-led wizards haste with odours sweet;
> O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
> And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
> Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
> And join thy voice unto the angel quire,
> From out his secret altar touched with hallowed fire.

# BOOK I. ZOROASTRIANISM

## CHAPTER 1

### ZOROASTER AND THE PARSIS

I praise the good Mazdayasnian religion, which is the religion given by God to Zoroaster.—PARSI CREED.[1]

A FEW explanatory pages seem to be needed before we proceed to details, since it is found in experience that the subject of this book is very little known. Zoroaster—who in these pages will be called by his own name Zarathushtra, rather than by its Graeco-Roman form—is dimly identified as a storied Eastern Sage who taught fire-worship and dualism, that is the division of the world between Ormazd (*Ahura Mazdah*) and Ahriman (*Angra Mainyu*), the Good and the Evil Powers, equal and co-eternal. This may as well be stated here, since the student will not find either fire-worship or dualism among the tenets of the Parsis as expounded below. The name of the Prophet Zoroaster will be associated by some with a romance by Marion Crawford, by more with the ravings of a dangerous lunatic named Nietzsche, who impudently fathered on 'Zarathustra' doctrines which have been the undoing of the country from which they came, and would perhaps have poisoned other lands had not the war revealed them in their true light. To the mythical Zoroaster of Crawford and of Nietzsche may be added the equally mythical figure of the later Parsi tradition, some of whose features reappear in Greek and Roman writers. It will not therefore surprise the reader of the only English translation of the

[1] See p. 163.

sacred books of the Parsis, to find that one of the learned translators regarded the Sage himself as a myth and nothing more.

In this book the Founder of the religion of the Parsis, a most conspicuous though numerically small community in India, and especially Bombay, will be treated on the evidence as a real person. His date is given by the tradition of mediaeval Persia as 660–583 B.C. This is probably four or five centuries too late; and the Prophet is rather to be regarded as the earliest religious teacher whose name is known to us among the Aryan-speaking peoples. Traditionally his activity is associated with cities in ancient Media, Mouru and Ragha, now Merv and Rai, south of the Caspian. Here again tradition is probably wrong: a tradition only traceable many centuries after its subject's death is not calculated to command much respect. He is more likely to have preached in the countries far away to the east, in Balkh or Seistan.

The sacred book of the Parsis is called the *Avesta*, or (incorrectly) the *Zend-Avesta*. It occupies three volumes of the *Sacred Books of the East*, translated by the late James Darmesteter and Professor L. H. Mills. The translation needs considerable checking by the knowledge accumulated since it was made more than thirty years ago; and the doctrine of Zarathushtra's mythical character, and the very late date of the Hymns assigned to him, has been repudiated by every scholar except its author, a most brilliant Orientalist, who died before he could read the verdict of science upon his unlucky paradox. It will be seen that the English student of the Avesta suffers from serious imperfection in his tools, admirably fashioned though they were in their day.

The contents of the Avesta will be described in some detail below. From a literary point of view, the poetical parts of it are set forth with frequent translations in the writer's little book, *Early Religious Poetry of Persia*.[1] Lest some dogmatic statements in the following pages should be thought to rest

[1] Cambridge Manuals of Science and Literature, 1911.

on mere assertion, it may be as well to premise that elaborate discussion of the many problems of language and thought has been attempted in his Hibbert Lectures for 1912, on *Early Zoroastrianism*.[1] In that work there is a complete prose version of the Hymns of Zarathushtra, usually quoted in this book, and annotated translations of the most important passages of Greek authors bearing on the subject.

The language of the Avesta belongs to what we call the Indo-Iranian branch of the Aryan or Indo-European family. Persian is its nearest modern relative, apart from other Iranian dialects found in Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and regions lying between the Himalayas and Asiatic Russia. Iranian language is exceedingly close to the Sanskritic Indian. The Iranian word *Hindu* (cf. *Indus, Hindu*stan), as compared with the Sanskrit *Sindhu* (*Sindh*), illustrates very conspicuous sound-changes that differentiate the two branches of one family: initial *s* before vowels was changed to *h* (as in Greek), and the difficult aspirates *gh*, *bh*, *dh*, dropped their aspiration (as in all our languages except Greek and Latin). Apart from these phonetic changes, the language of the Veda and that of the Avesta are closer to each other than any other Aryan groups, except Lithuanian and Slavonic. The affinity points us back to a period, probably not more than three and a half millennia ago, when the ancestors of the Vedic and the Avestan peoples lived together in Iran, before the Indian section descended on the Panjab. We shall see that this affinity has great importance for the history of the religion we are to study.

One other ancient Iranian language demands mention here, besides the two dialects, Gathic and Later Avestan, in which the Avesta is composed.[2] This is Old Persian, ancestor of Middle Persian or Pahlavi, the language of a voluminous Parsi mediaeval literature, and of Modern Persian, connected by us with such poetry as that of Omar Khayyám. Old Persian comes to us from the wonderful rock inscriptions of

[1] Williams & Norgate, 1913.
[2] For Gathic and Later Avestan, see below, p. 53.

the Achaemenian Kings of Persia, and especially the great one of Darius I at Behistun. On this Darius tells the story of his campaigns and his government, with constant reference to the evidently deep religious faith that sustained him. The relation of that religion to the Avestan system is discussed in *Early Zoroastrianism*, ch. ii.

It may be convenient if we summarize here the views of the development of Parsi religion which are presumed in this book. For the defence of novel features in them, reference may be made to the author's Hibbert Lectures, or in briefer form to the little Cambridge Manual. Zarathushtra was a Reformer who came to a people holding the ancient nature-worship still found without fundamental alteration in the Rigveda. Their gods were Sky and Earth, Sun and Moon, Fire, Rivers and Winds. They offered worship on open hill-tops, and had no temples. An intoxicating drink called *Sauma* was believed to confer immortality. The gods were collectively called *daivas* (Skt. *deva*, Av. *daeva*, Lat. *deus*, Engl. *Tues*-day), or 'heavenly ones'. Zarathushtra preached a spiritual monotheism, centring on the worship of *Ahura Mazdah*, 'the Wise Lord'. He rejected the *daeva* gods, declaring that they had 'chosen violence': their worshippers had rejected his preaching, and cruelly used the peaceful rayats who accepted his religion. Hence the old name for gods became a name for devils. The only divine beings he will admit are abstractions, not so much angels as an integral part of the Being of God. Over against the Spirit of Good there stands 'Falsehood', the power of evil which fights against Good, destined to be utterly destroyed at the last, with all who take the wrong side in the great struggle. The followers of Truth will go to live for ever in the 'House of Song' with Mazdah.

This pure and simple faith is set forth in the *Gathas*, or Hymns, which form the central part of the Avesta. The Later Avesta, in verse and prose, shows at every point that it must be separated by some centuries from the Gathas, from

which it differs in language, and still more in thought. It seems clear that the old worship returned when Zarathushtra was gone. The collective name of the old gods was still used to describe demons, but they themselves were worshipped as angels, only formally subordinated to Ahura Mazdah. A further and very drastic modification was due to the Magi, an indigenous priestly tribe much resembling the Brahmans, who worked their way into the priesthood of Persian religion, probably after the reforms of Zarathushtra had (somewhat feebly) influenced it. The Magi had special customs and beliefs of their own, some of which they brought with them into their adopted cultus. Most conspicuous was the ritual, which has practically no link with the Gathas, though Parsis do not recognize inconsistency between the two. It goes with a system which may not unfairly be called Dualist, inasmuch as every creature of the Good Spirit is balanced by a creation of the Evil. That power is now called Angra Mainyu, 'Enemy Spirit,' from a casual epithet once found in the Gathas. Since however the Magi retained the dogma of the ultimate and complete destruction of evil, it may be doubted whether Dualism is a really appropriate term.

Such is in very brief outline the probable development of the religion we have to describe. We now turn to details, and begin naturally with Zarathushtra.

# CHAPTER 2

## THE TEACHING OF ZARATHUSHTRA

They said, Who art thou?
He said, I am a Voice
of one crying in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of the Lord.

ZARATHUSHTRA, whom the Romans called Zoroaster, following the Greeks, is one of the earliest of the 'goodly fellowship of the Prophets', so far as their names are enrolled on earth. His history, and the genuineness of the archaic Hymns which tell us all we know about him, will not be discussed here.[1] The flood of clever, stupid scepticism which has long swept indiscriminately over all the great names of religious history, has begun to ebb, and common sense is getting its opportunity again. One conspicuous doctrine of common sense is that books must have authors, movements must have originators, effects must be presumed to have causes. And while it is obviously preferable, from the standpoint of a candidate for a doctorate, or a writer for the 'Rationalist' propaganda, who must at all costs be original, to do his bricklaying up in the air without a foundation, it is more likely to advance knowledge if we frankly adopt a less sensational procedure.

All the information we possess about Zarathushtra comes from the *Gāthās*, seventeen poems, arranged in five groups, according to their metres, and containing nine hundred lines in all. Their metres are much more elaborate than those of the Later Avesta, and decidedly less comparable with metres used in ancient Indian poetry. But the language is exceedingly archaic, differing only in phonetic development from

[1] See *E. Z.*, chap. iii.

Vedic, with a minimum of new formations, and a considerable show of forms which stand nearer to the common Indo-Iranian parent speech than does Vedic itself. The absolutely simple and natural picture of the Prophet, drawn with convincing unconsciousness by his own hand in the main, gives us its own credentials by the very impossibility of accounting for invention. Professor P. W. Schmiedel of Zürich, in a rare deviation into constructiveness, gave us a useful canon for historical criticism when he marked off what he called 'Pillar' passages, the reliability of which was guaranteed by their divergence from what the earliest age could have invented. The Gathas have plenty of 'Pillars' of this kind. An age in which a crude apotheosis has removed the Prophet from reality would not have put into his mouth such words as these:

> To what land shall I go to flee, whither to flee? From nobles and my peers they sever me, nor are the people pleased with me, nor the Liar rulers of the land. How am I to please thee, Mazdah Ahura?
>
> I know wherefore I am without success; (because) few cattle are mine, and for that I have but few folk. I cry unto thee, see thou to it, Ahura, granting me support as friend gives to friend. Teach me by the Right the acquisition of Good Thought. (*Ys.* $46^{1-2}$.)

Or again, would have made the Ox-Soul, or Spirit of Agriculture, cry out thus on hearing that Zarathushtra is appointed its champion:[1]

> That I must be content with the ineffectual word of an impotent man for my protector, when I wish for one that commands mightily! When ever shall there be one who shall give him (the Ox) effectual help? (*Ys.* $29^{9}$.)

Or once more, would have descended to the homely triviality of this picture from real life:

> The Kavi's wanton did not please Zarathushtra Spitama at the Winter Gate, in that he stayed him from taking refuge with him, and when there came to him also his two steeds shivering with cold. (*Ys.* $51^{12}$.)

[1] The translations from the Gathas are taken from my own version in *E.Z.*, occasionally amended.

In contrast to all this reality stands the picture of later ages, which deviates from dignity and probability more and more as time goes on. Quite apart from this, we have the distance in time to allow for. We are bound to ask what authority there is for even reasonably possible assertions about the Prophet for which there is no better witness than the later Avesta, or the literature of the Sassanian age, which opened in the third century A.D. The grotesque and barren miracles attested from those later ages we reject on the mere reading of them. But any sound principle of historical criticism must surely bid us suspect profoundly statements about the Prophet which cannot be traced beyond, say, fifteen centuries from our own time. It is safe to restrict ourselves accordingly to the Gathas, the only Parsi literature, with one exception, which has any claim to come within several centuries of the Prophet's time. That exception, the 'Gatha of Seven Chapters', a little prose ritual in the archaic dialect of the verse Gathas, does not really concern us here, as there is only one mention of Zarathushtra's name, and we can feel no certainty that it is not a gloss, since it is so isolated. If it is a genuine element, it is significant that we should read so early:

> Mazdah and Zarathushtra we adore. (*Ys.* $42^{21}$.)

We may proceed to draw from the Gathas the outlines of Zarathushtra's personality, history, and teaching.

The society into which he was born is well seen from the names of his associates. His own name and that of his disciple and father-in-law Frashaoshtra contain the word *uštra* 'camel'. His patron Vīshtāspa and his son-in-law Jāmāspa similarly are named from *aspa* 'horse'. The brothers Frashaoshtra and Jamaspa and their sister, whom the Prophet married, have the clan name Hvogva, 'having fine cattle'. The only Gathic name whose significance takes us into another sphere is *Pouruchista*, 'very thoughtful,' which belongs to the Prophet's daughter. Her nuptial ode, on her marriage to Jamaspa, is the last of the Gathas. She is the only person in

the circle born after the Prophet's preaching begins, and she alone has a name that has connotations of religion. This is of course entirely in keeping with the truth of the situation. The names are alone a fatal bar against any mythological theory of the origins of the religion.

In what social stratum did the Prophet arise? It is not possible to be dogmatic, but the one thing that does seem reasonably certain is that he was not a Magus. The burden of proof rests on those who would claim that the late affirmative tradition is to be trusted. It is of course extremely easy to see how the claim was thought of. The Magi, as we shall see, came into a very close relation to the religion, and had the strongest motive for making the Founder one of themselves. The Greek writers from the fifth century B.C. attest the claim. But what does this amount to? It was in the fifth century that the Magi, after failing to win political power, gradually worked themselves into an indispensable position in religion. We can prove that it was only the Magian portrait of Zarathushtra that the Greeks ever saw. The evidence then amounts to no more than this, that in the age when the Magi secured their place in the system of Persian religion the Founder of that religion was regarded as a Magus. But how many centuries had passed since the Prophet's own day?

The question of the date of Zarathushtra is one that must not be examined here: it must suffice to repeat the results of a detailed investigation in another place,[1] and add that further consideration has strengthened the belief in a very early date. Nothing later than the tenth century B.C. can be admitted, it would seem, and another century or two may be quite reasonably allowed. If so, we have a gulf of at least five centuries between Zarathushtra and our earliest Greek allusions to him. *A priori* probability would need to be very strong before we gave much attention to such belated evidence. And since these same Greek writers solemnly set his *floruit* at six thousand years before Xerxes, we should be very inconsistent if

[1] See *E. Z.*, pp. 18–22.

we gave weight to one half of the statement which no historian would dream of allowing to the other.[1] There are two possible answers to our question as to Zarathushtra's social position. According to Herodotus, two of the six tribes of the Medes were the *Ἀριζαντοί* and the *Μάγοι*, which stand first and last in his list. The former are clearly the Aryan nobility.[2] Now the Behistun Inscription in one of its forms expressly calls Ahura Mazdah 'god of the Aryans'. He held this position a long time before Zarathushtra's day, as we know from an Assyrian source. It is accordingly suggested that Zarathushtra may have been born in the small clan of Aryan nobles whose special divinity was 'the Wise Lord'. The other possibility is that he belonged to the agricultural community, the religious value of whose occupation he preaches so strenuously. On the whole the latter seems perhaps more probable, though a whole-hearted belief in the peaceful pursuits of agriculture as against nomadism is quite

[1] On the real significance of the period thus assigned to Zarathushtra, see below, p. 21.

I am afraid some of my Parsi friends may think I am treating too cavalierly a doctrine many of them have seriously welcomed, although it flatly contradicts the Pahlavi tradition. I am reminded of the danger by observing that Mr Feridun Dadachanji—and there are few Parsis to whom I owe a greater debt—has gravely rebuked Western science for refusing this date: we are only Joshuas, jealous for Moses's sake! Mr Dadachanji's book was written in 1913, before I had the privilege of his friendship, and I hope by this time he realizes that the West does not determine hard facts of chronology by prepossessions. In his own chambers, during office hours, he would make short work of the one witness he produces. His brilliant brother, the late Mr Kersasp (*see* p. 124), would have us treat all the Greeks as a horde of false witnesses. It is possible to smile at such biassed advocacy, and yet say that a date which throws all chronology into confusion is easily explained by a misunderstanding of Persian statements about world millennia. Mr Dadachanji believes that the prophets of Israel borrowed from Zarathushtra. I was greatly disposed towards this view years ago, though to a more modest extent. But I am afraid there is very little left of this indebtedness when examined in 'dry light'. And dry light—the power of marshalling facts impartially and banishing the wish to believe—is before all things the most crying need of Indian critical scholarship. I return to this borrowing question below, pp. 68 ff.

[2] This remains certain even if with Prof. Carnoy, of Louvain, we make it = *Arizantava* 'of noble birth', instead of *Ariyazantava* 'of Aryan birth'. See *E. Z.*, pp. 183 ff.

natural in a far-sighted noble of profound religious genius. It should be added in fairness that there is one passage in the Gathas which makes Zarathushtra speak as a priest. It runs thus:

> I, as a priest, who would learn the straight (paths) by the Right, would learn by the Best Spirit how to practise husbandry by that thought in which it is thought of. (*Ys.* $33^{6}$.)

The old Aryan term (*Zaotar*, Sanskrit *hotar*), used here alone in the Gathas, does not imply an hereditary priesthood: the father of a family acted in this capacity. And here the very purpose of the priestly act is to gain illumination for the practice of husbandry. No priestly caste therefore is in view. The old word *āθravan*, 'fire-priest,' is entirely absent from the Gathas, in all probability by deliberate exclusion. The word *Magus* itself is not found even in the later Avesta, except in one late passage.

The place of Zarathushtra's birth and earlier life is beyond any certain conjecture. Our evidence, such as it is, dates from centuries after the Prophet's day, and we can only give it a very limited credence. Professor Williams Jackson's doctrine, that he was born in Western Iran, preached there without success, and then turned eastwards, to win success at last in Bactria, has great plausibility. The main importance of the question lies in its bearing on the subject of Chapter 4 below. The foundations of Zoroastrianism were laid in a corner, as far as civilization is concerned, whether of East or West. It is extremely significant that in the roll of saints[1] to be remembered in worship through the ages up to the present time, the very large majority of the names are unknown even to legend. They are in the main real characters—we can at any rate see no conceivable reason for the invention of their names. But they lived and died in a country which had no literature that could make its appeal to the world, and no political relations with lands whose annals survive.

[1] See *Yt.* $13^{96-142}$.

It is quite in accord with all this that Zarathushtra should have been from the first a voice crying in the wilderness. Two notable stanzas quoted above reveal the despair that oppressed him in the period of failure, when his soul went mourning because of the oppression of the enemy. He was then the leader of a small community, who were poor and powerless against the raids of nomads around. He prays wistfully for some earnest of the reward that he knows is awaiting righteousness at last—might he but have some earthly prosperity as well as treasure in heaven!

> Shall I indeed, O Right, earn that reward, even ten mares with a stallion and a camel, which was promised to me, O Mazdah, as well as through thee the future gift of Salvation and Immortality? (*Ys.* $44^{18}$.)

The verse is precious for its naïve reality: this lofty-minded Prophet is truly a man!

The discipline of failure and persecution through which he was called to pass had a manifest influence upon the Prophet's religious development. It strengthened his conviction of his own mission, and of the future triumph. His language about Bendva, the persecuting chieftain, and Grehma, the priest of the hostile religion, is that of the Imprecatory Psalms.

I forbid all intercourse with the False (*Ys.* $49^{3}$) is his precept. There is no doubt as to the consequences if men disobey his teaching:

> Those of you that put not in practice this word as I think and utter it, to them shall be woe at the end of life. (*Ys.* $45^{3}$.)

With the conviction of the divine call to the prophetic office goes a fierce intolerance of teachers who have not the truth:

> I was ordained at the first by thee for this purpose: all others I look upon with hatred of spirit. (*Ys.* $44^{11}$.)

A more extended reference to his call deserves study:

> As the Holy One I knew thee, Mazdah Ahura, when Good Thought came to me and asked me, 'Who art thou? Whose art thou? By what sign will thou appoint the days for questioning about thine and thee?'

Then I said to him 'First, Zarathushtra am I, true hater of the False man to the uttermost of my power, but to the Righteous would I be a powerful support, that I may win the future things of the Infinite Kingdom, according as I praise and sing thee, Mazdah.

As the Holy One I knew thee, Mazdah Ahura, when Good Thought came unto me. To his question 'For what wilt thou make decision?' (I made reply) 'At every offering of reverence to thy Fire, I will bethink me of Right so long as I have power.

Then show me Right, upon whom I call.'

To this Mazdah replies:

'Linking it (the Right) with Piety, I have come hither. Ask of us now what things we are here for thee to ask. For thine asking is as that of a mighty one, since he that is able should make thee as a mighty one possessed of thy desire.'

As the Holy One I knew thee, Mazdah Ahura, when Good Thought came to me, when first by your words I was instructed. Shall it bring me sorrow among men, my devotion, in doing that which ye tell me is the best?

And when thou saidst unto me, 'To Right shalt thou go for teaching,' then thou didst not command what I did not obey: 'Speed thee, ere my Obedience come, followed by treasure-laden Destiny, who shall render to men severally the destinies of the twofold award.' (*Ys.* $43^{7-12}$.)

This passage may be regarded as a record of later reflection upon the Prophet's conversion. He has been a devout worshipper, doing service to the deity of his clan before the Sacred Fire, a symbol which he has received from the past with the name of the 'Wise Lord'. But there comes to him a spiritual crisis in which he recognizes the presence of a voice of God within his soul. He stands at the parting of the ways, and must choose his path. The choice is between *Aša* and *Druj*, Truth and Falsehood, Right and Wrong, and he must associate himself with one of two parties, the *ašavano* and the *drèġvanto*. He makes his choice with emphasis, and prays that the nature of 'Right', the Divine Order, may be revealed to him. His determined prayer is rewarded by a consciousness of illumination, and he realizes how mighty is 'prayer when it is prayer indeed'. He knows that the choice will not ensure him earthly happiness; but he confirms his choice,

assured that obedience will be God's angel bringing treasure in heaven when God's own time shall come.

Scanty though our evidence is, it is certainly sufficient to show that the whole scheme of Zarathushtra's religion was rooted and grounded in eschatology, and this in its turn rises from the Reformer's personal experience. The old question, 'Why do the righteous suffer?' was a most powerful element in the building up of Israel's theology, but it did not occupy the almost exclusive place that it takes in the formation of Zarathushtra's thought. Of course we must put behind it another conviction, without which he would never have drawn the deductions we are following. That God is absolutely just is an axiom from which all else follows. It assures him that unmerited suffering such as he and his followers had to bear was in itself the warrant of a very different future. Since this present world is one in which we see

> Truth for ever on the scaffold,
> Wrong for ever on the throne,

it follows that in another world the balance must be redressed, and Right win a final victory, to be shared by those who have lived and suffered in the cause of Right. Hence the doctrine of personal immortality, which Zarathushtra did not invent, is moralized, and a momentous step is taken in the history of religion. For, be it remembered, however inevitably implied this doctrine may have been in the revelation of Sinai, it was a thousand years after Zarathushtra when Jesus drew the inference for the first time.

Side by side with this doctrine of ethical rewards and punishments for the individual stands the unshakably optimist outlook for the world. If God is just and almighty, He cannot tolerate the victory of wrong except as a means towards a greater triumph of Right; and it is obvious that His will cannot be overborne by a stronger power. It followed indisputably that

> somehow Good
> Shall be the final goal of Ill.

'*If* God is just and almighty . . .' And how did Zarathushtra know that? It is by no means self-evident. So great a mind as that of Gautama rejected it. It can hardly be said that Indian thought has ever risen to it. There are Western philosophers who have dismally overshot it and come down on the side of pessimism. Whence did the Sage of Iran receive his axiom, in an age when men had not even realized the preliminary doctrine that God is One?

In the case of Zarathushtra we have a difficulty which does not trouble us when we ask the same question about Socrates:

> that white soul, clothed in a satyr's form,
> That shone beneath the laurels day by day,
> And, filled with burning faith in God and Right,
> Doubted men's doubts away.

We have the environment of Socrates, and abundant materials for tracing the development of Greek thought about God. And yet, when heredity and environment are traced with scientific fullness, how far have we come, after all, to the solution of our question? In the material world Nature may or may not work *per saltum*—one who is not a naturalist would be rash indeed if he set down either alternative as preferable. But in the sphere of Mind most assuredly Athena is perpetually springing fully grown and fully armed from the head of Zeus. It is necessary to examine carefully the surroundings and antecedents of a great poet, or inventor, or prophet; but in all of them the achievement that makes them significant for humanity is not a little methodical step in advance, perfectly normal and intelligible to those who have the data, but a sudden flash of insight, an inspiration unexplained by any law known to us. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and the ways of what we call genius are not likely to be interpreted so as to fit regulations. In modern scientific attempts to delineate the history of ideas there is often far too little allowance made for pure intuition. We have very scanty evidence as to Zarathushtra's spiritual antecedents. But if we had, we should still have to fall back on the fact that he was

a Prophet, and his conviction of God's justice and omnipotence 'came to him'—no one can say how.

One feature in his conception we may be able to fix. The central figure of Asha was inherited—compare the (not quite identical) Sanskrit *Ṛta*, defined in the dictionary as 'established order, sacred ordinance, divine law, truth, right'. The impression we get from the Gathas is that the order of Nature played a large part in Zarathushtra's preconceptions. The thought of Creation stirs him to real poetry, and he has caught the closeness of the bond uniting natural and moral law. Two fine stanzas may be quoted:

> He that in the beginning thus thought, 'Let the blessed realms be filled with lights,' he it is that by his wisdom created Right. Those realms that the Best Thought shall possess thou dost glorify, Mazdah, by thy spirit, which, O Ahura, is evermore the same.
>
> I conceived of thee, O Mazdah, in my thought that thou, the First, art also the Last—that thou art Father of Good Thought, for thus I apprehended thee with mine eye—that thou didst truly create Right, and art the Lord (*Ahura*) to judge the actions of life. (*Ys.* $31^{7-8}$.)[1]

We may refer also to the ode in which questions are asked of the Creator, to which His own name is clearly the implied answer. (A verse rendering of it will be found below, pp. 50 f.) Those who—in Persia or in Greece—guessed the presence of the word for *star* in Zarathushtra's name, at least hit upon a subject that was near the Sage's heart. The glory of the Creator was a thought which Zarathushtra stamped indelibly upon his religion. In days when its outlines had become so much blurred that scholars dispute still whether Zarathushtra's name should be retained in connexion with it, King Darius could concentrate his creed in a few impressive lines:

> A Great God is Ahuramazda, who created this earth, who created you heaven, who created man, who created welfare for man, who made Darius king, one king of many, one lord of many. (Elvend inscription, &c.)

[1] See some comments on these stanzas in *E. R. P. P.*, p. 85, and the context below, pp. 49 ff.

To understand the meaning of *Asha*, which is crucial for Zarathushtra's system, we must consider its opposite, *Druj*, which is the one name beyond all others for Evil in the Gathas. The doctrine of Evil in general we must return to presently, but here we must note that the whole of Evil is concentrated in Falsehood. This was probably an inherited element of the teaching: the prominence of Truth in the theory of Persian ethics is well known, and we remember how Darius uses *drauga*, 'lie,' and its corresponding verb as the regular terms for evil, by which he means rebellion against himself. Since in Sanskrit and in the Later Avesta the word is a general one for 'fiend', it might be urged that the more special meaning, perfectly certain in Gathic and Old Persian, is a development. But cognates in other Indo-European languages, and especially our own, seem to prove that the connotation of 'deceit' was there from the first. In that case it is striking that half a millennium before the great Prophet of the Exile we should have so emphatic an anticipation of the declaration that he who worships a lower ideal than he knows or might know is coming before God with a Lie in his right hand.

For the further development of Zarathushtra's doctrine of God we must follow up the concept of the *Ahuro* or Lords, whom the next age crystallized into archangels, under the class name of *Amèša Spènta* (Ameshaspands in Pahlavi) or 'Immortal Holy Ones'.[1] If we start from these later presuppositions, we cannot help reading the Gathas with some surprise and misgiving. These archangels are perpetually placed on the same level as Ahura Mazdah. The second personal pronoun is used in the plural, in phrases like 'ye, O Mazdah and Asha'. The very first page of the Gathas gives us a typical instance:

> I would praise you, as never before, Right, and Good Thought, and Mazdah Ahura, and those for whom Piety makes an imperishable Dominion grow: come ye to my help at my call. (*Ys.* 28[3].)

[1] Or 'Beneficent', see below, p. 28.

The abstractions whose names are printed here with initial capitals are successively Aša, Vohu Manah, Aramaiti, and Khshathra. The first two of them are linked with the Wise Lord constantly throughout the Gathas. Ahura has 'one will with the Best Right' (*Ys.* $28^8$). He is not only creator but even 'Father' of Right (*Ys.* $44^3$, $47^2$), Good Thought (*Ys.* $31^8$, $45^4$), and Piety (*Ys.* $45^4$). He is moreover very emphatically set above them. Thus in *Ys.* 29, the curious hymn in which the 'Ox-Soul' pleads with Right for a protector, this first of the Spirits replies:

> Mazdah knoweth best the purposes that have been wrought already by demons and by mortals, and that shall be wrought hereafter. He, Ahura, is the decider. So shall it be as he shall will. (*Ys.* $29^4$.)

Accordingly appeal is made to Mazdah, who pronounces his high decision. In three Gathic stanzas we have the six named together, and in marked dependence on Ahura. It may be well to quote them:

> And both thy (gifts) shall be for sustenance, even Welfare and Immortality. Piety linked with Right shall advance the Dominion of Good Thought, its permanence and power. By these, Mazdah, dost thou bless the foes of thy foes. (*Ys.* $34^{11}$.)
>
> Him thou shouldst seek to exalt with prayers of Piety, him that is called Wise Lord for ever, for that he hath promised through his own Right and Good Thought that Welfare and Immortality shall be in his Dominion, power and permanence in his house. (*Ys.* $45^{10}$.)

Here it is well to note (cf. *E. Z.*, p. 373) that 'power and permanence' are mentioned in exactly the same way as 'Welfare and Immortality', and that 'his Dominion' and 'his house' are expressly parallel. There is therefore no clear marking off of the six as a closed company. The other verse (*Ys.* $47^1$) has been noted as 'almost a mnemonic', gathering together the principal terms of worship.[1]

> By his holy Spirit and by Best Thought, deed and word, in accordance with Right, Mazdah Ahura with Dominion and Piety shall give to us Welfare and Immortality.

[1] See *E. R. P. P.*, p. 108.

The Six are reinforced with the holy Spirit and the triad of Word, Thought, and Deed.

It is fairly evident that there was reason for the isolation of the Six as supreme among spirits; but it may be doubted whether the process did not go too far. There is another 'Spirit', the 'Ox-Creator', to whom Mazdah is 'Father' (*Ys.* 47[3]), a privilege never assigned to Dominion, Welfare, or Immortality. Moreover in another place Mazdah is himself creator of the Ox, Water and Plants, Welfare, and Immortality (*Ys.* 51[7]), so that this Spirit comes very close to Mazdah's own being. On the other hand there is an immense difference between the members of the Hexad, the last two being very far behind the middle pair, who in their turn are altogether eclipsed by the first two.

This brings us to the central point in the doctrine of the Ameshaspands, one which has been very strangely overlooked.[1] Right and Good Thought and the Wise Lord are invoked together again and again; and, more remarkable still, we have appeals to 'you Wise Lords'—Mazdah Ahura in the plural! This may be explained by a well-known idiom as meaning 'Mazdah and ye other Ahuras'. The great Iranian lexicographer, Bartholomae, would include among these Ahuras not only the Ameshaspands but some other spirits of the same order, prominent in the Gathas. But since only Asha and Vohu Manah are linked with Mazdah in the recurrent phraseology just quoted, it seems unsafe to give the title Ahura to any others—at least in this special sense, for (like the Greek κύριος) the title was capable of application even to men.

Now we may well ask what sort of archangels these are, which can be invoked with the Deity under a common title. The question answers itself when we find that 'Good (Best) Thought' can be replaced by 'thy Thought' (*Ys.* 46[7]). Is it not plain that this 'Good Thought' is no more separable from God than the Spirit is in Christian theology? There is indeed

[1] The present writer has seen no treatment of it earlier than his own in *E. R. P. P.*, p. 58 f.

a very striking parallelism throughout, in that 'Good Thought', like 'Spirit', is found in men—the Divine within us. The inference that seems to the present writer inevitable is that Asha and Vohu Manah are not archangels at all, but Divine attributes within the hypostasis of Deity. Piety (*Aramaiti*), which is described as God's child, and the Ox-Creator, of which (as we have seen) the same is said in one place, while in another the function is assumed by Mazdah himself, would seem to be likewise definable. And if so, there is no reason why we should not include Dominion (*Xšaθra*), Welfare or Salvation (*Haurvatāt*), and Immortality (*Amèrètāt*), which are clearly concepts of the same order, although we cannot make a dogmatic statement. In any case we see that this profound thinker's instinct not only grasped the supreme truth of the Oneness of God, but realized the vital corollary—blindness to which has vitiated the monotheism of Islam—that there must be diversity within the Godhead if the unity is to be a fruitful doctrine.

If then these abstractions which fill the pages of the Gathas are to be regarded as facets of a diamond, the unity of which represents Deity, we can put them all together and realize how rich is Zarathushtra's conception of God. His own name is the starting-point: God is Wisdom and he is Lordship. The Omniscience of God is insisted on everywhere, and it survived into the Magian theology, where the devil had to be made ignorant in order to be duly antithetical. Zarathushtra never suggests any limitations on the Divine Sovranty. Its exercise may be deferred till the Consummation, for reasons which the Prophet never questions. But there is no equal and opposite power of darkness limiting his power or vanquishing his Dominion, which will come in God's own time.

The theological implications of the great Hexad are too obvious to need much stating. Asha suggests at once the splendid sentence in which Porphyry describes Oromasdes, that 'his body is like unto Light and his soul unto Truth'. Truth, Order, Right, the Reign of Law—such a conception of God's

being is not likely to be undervalued by those whose theology has been drawn from the New Testament and illuminated by modern scientific discovery. 'Good Thought' reminds us of the Logos idea, but is of rather wider application, coming nearer indeed, as we have seen, to the Christian doctrine of the Spirit of God. Besides this meaning, and that of 'spirituality' in man, the term sometimes denotes the unity of goodness as manifested in a community of good men and women; and it is also a name for Paradise. 'The mind is its own place,' and 'Good Thought' is the home of the good man for ever. That 'Dominion' belongs to God, and is to be realized at the end of all things, when His victory is complete, is of course a fundamental principle of Zarathushtra—and of Jesus. Piety, Welfare or Salvation, and Immortality are gifts of God, but He always gives Himself.

There are many problems affecting the Ameshaspands which need not be discussed here, as they belong to the archaeology of our subject rather than to theology proper. They have moreover been examined elsewhere.[1] It is time for us to pass on to Zarathushtra's doctrine of Evil. And in the first place, how far is the Iranian seer really open to the charge of Dualism? In answering this question we need not feel hampered by the Magian system which attached itself to his name. We shall see later that it really differs widely in spirit, though linked to the Founder's teaching by very plausible external contacts. Here as throughout this chapter we confine ourselves to the Gathas, and accept the commentary of later religious thought only as it approves itself to be consistent with indications in the Gathas themselves.

The speculative question turns on our understanding of one great passage in which the Prophet is clearly intending to sum up his most fundamental doctrines in a credal form. It must be quoted entire.

Now the two primal spirits, who revealed themselves in vision as

[1] See *E. Z.*, index under 'Amshaspands'.

Twins, are the Better and the Bad in thought, word and action. And between these two the wise once chose aright, the foolish not so.

And when these twain Spirits came together in the beginning, they established Life and Not-Life, and that at the last the Worst Existence shall be to the followers of the Lie, but the Best Thought to him that follows Right.

Of these twain Spirits he that followed the Lie chose doing the worst things; the holiest Spirit chose Right, he that clothes him with the massy heavens as a garment. So likewise they that are fain to please Ahura Mazdah by dutiful actions.

Between these twain the demons also chose not aright, for infatuation came upon them as they took counsel together, so that they chose the Worst Thought. Then they rushed together to violence, that they might enfeeble the world of man. (*Ys.* $30^{3-6}$.)

Side by side with this should be set another passage:

I will speak of the Spirits twain at the first beginning of the world, of whom the holier thus spake to the enemy: 'Neither thought nor teachings nor wills nor beliefs nor words nor deeds nor selves nor souls of us twain agree.' (*Ys.* $45^{2}$.)

We have here then a 'Vision': the seer is setting forth an intuition—indeed if we took him quite literally it would be a 'dream'. What are the 'Spirits'? The Avestan *Mainyu* is cognate with *manah*, which we have rendered 'Thought', and (which is more important) seems sometimes to be substituted for it. The word is not quite our 'spirit', then, except as used in a sentence like 'There was quite a different spirit in the next speech'. The meaning of the passage turns on the sense of 'Twins'. Later ages took the word with prosaic literalness, as was natural when mythology was in the ascendant. Accordingly we read in a mediaeval book 'Ohrmazd and Ahraman have been two brothers in one womb'.[1] The next step was naturally to find a parent, and we have the concept of *Zèrvan Akarana*, 'Infinite Time,' who was father of the two great opposing Principles. The notion has naturally failed to get a footing in orthodox Parsi religion at all times, so that we need not stop to ask what Zarathushtra would have thought of it.

[1] See *S. B. E.* xxxvii. 242.

He had very little use for mythology, except to supply him occasionally with a figure. It does not seem probable that he would have favoured any interpretation which made Ahura Mazdah either twin or parent of the evil principle! It is best to assume that the word 'Twin' is thrown out for a momentary purpose without thought of logical developments. This is the easier to assume when we remember how completely free Zarathushtra is from any material theogonies: to call Ahura Mazdah 'Father of Good Thought' means for him only the use of a spiritual metaphor. In that case what he is thinking of is the logical eternity of Good and Evil as an obverse and reverse which cannot be conceived of apart.[1] If we say God is Light, we mean that 'in Him is no darkness at all'. If in heaven there is 'death no more', the very blessedness of Life is thrown into relief by the contrast of what our Sage calls 'Not-life', which has been overcome. In that sense Evil is eternal, for a world wherein the Will of God which is our Peace is everywhere lovingly followed will not have lost the shuddering memory of a rebelliousness that brought all woe. Zarathushtra is manifestly concerned here with the tremendous fact of *Choice*. Free Will is the pivot of his whole theology. Neither angels nor men ever did good under compulsion.

> When thou, Mazdah, in the beginning didst create beings and (men's) Selves by thy Thought, and intelligences—when thou didst make life clothed with body, when (thou madest) actions and teachings, whereby one may exercise choice at one's free will;
>
> Then lifts up his voice the false speaker or the true speaker, he that knows or he that knows not, each according to his own heart and thought. Passing from one to another, Piety pleads with the spirit in which there is wavering. (*Ys.* $31^{11-12}$.)

God designs to 'plead', but will never coerce. Choice is the supreme fact, and nothing can relieve intelligent beings of their responsibility. When therefore Zarathushtra emphasizes so

[1] We may illustrate by the Johannine writings, where a truth is often set forth in positive and negative form. Thus 1 John $1^{5-6}$, $2^{27}$, $3^{11-12}$, $5^{12}$, &c.

tremendously the gulf that yawns between the 'two tempers', which exist together as inevitably as convex and concave in the same curve, he is simply hammering home his fundamental precept, that Right and Wrong have no concord, that compromise is impossible, and we must make our choice knowing that all eternity depends upon it. The whole ring of the passage forbids the recognition of mere metaphysics. If the Prophet gives a thought to the Origin of Evil, it is just as the doctor searches for the cause of his patient's malady: both are thinking only of the problem of a cure.

The passage we have quoted tells us how the choice went. Of those two 'Spirits', or mental attitudes, 'one which turned towards Falsehood (*dregvant*) chose to do the worst things', while 'the holiest chose Asha'. We must pause here again to remind ourselves that our text is not in English. 'Holy', with its comparative and superlative (*spènta, spanyah, spēništa*), is an extremely common term in the Gathas. The word is inherited from the most primitive antiquity, for we find it as far away as Lithuanian, on the Baltic, where *szueñtas* is 'holy', and farther west still, in our own family: the non-philologist must take it on trust that Shakespeare's *unhouseled* contains it! But in the history of words their distant origin matters much less than their later environment, and a false etymology may affect the interpretation far more than the true one. There happened to be a verb the flexion of which brought it into close apparent connexion with this adjective *Spenta*.[1] The two occur together in a Gathic verse where a play on the similarity is obvious:

> A holy man . . . advances Asha. (*Ys.* 51[21].)[2]

This suggests that the connotation of 'holy' was *beneficent*, from association with this really unrelated verb. This traditional understanding of the word is supported by the fact that in the second of the crucial passages quoted above (*Ys.* 45[2])

[1] It was the verb 'benefit', of which *saošyant* ('he that shall deliver') is the future participle.

[2] *nā spəntə . . . ašəm spōnvaṭ.*

the antithesis of 'holier' is 'enemy' (angra, see below). There is obviously a fitness in recognizing 'friendly' and 'fiendly' as the association of the Two Spirits here. It was then the 'most beneficent disposition' that turned to the Right; and the Prophet's radiant optimism stops to throw out a jewel of inspiring poetry—it is that Spirit that must win, for it 'wears the massy heavens as a garment'. There is no doubt in Zarathushtra's mind that the Universe is friendly to us. And of course there is no question on which side is the Wise Lord: all who would please him make the good choice.

On the other side, the wrong choice was made by the 'demons'. Who were they? Their name, identical with the Indian *deva* and the Latin *deus*, in the age when Indian and Iranian lived together as one nation, belonged to the bright Nature-gods, Dyaus the sky, Mithra the Light, Soma the drink of immortality which foams up in the cup of the waxing moon, and the rest. Zarathushtra inherited a more abstract cult which had in it the seeds of an ethical monotheism. But it was not theology that brought him to condemn these ancestral gods so severely, and to make their name an actual term for 'devils'. He saw the wild nomads offer sacrifice to Indra or to Victory [1] and then go off on a cruel raid upon his peaceful husbandmen, and he formed the same opinion on their religion that we form when we hear of Turks bowing before 'Allah the All-merciful' in their mosques before going out to exterminate Armenians.

> For ye (Daevas) have brought it to pass that men who do the worst things shall be called 'beloved of the Daevas'. (*Ys.* 32[4].)

*Devâusjuṣṭa*, the Vedic compound which is used here in its Iranian form, had once a purely good meaning. Religion had been tried by its deeds and found wanting. And Zarathushtra, who never doubted the real existence of spiritual beings, good and evil, accounted for the sorrowful facts before him by his own great doctrine of Choice. These old-world gods had

[1] Skt. *Vṛtraghna*, Av. *Vərəθrayna*.

been forced to choose between Right and Falsehood, and they made the wrong decision.

The case of two of them must be specially noticed, in preparation for the next chapter. What are the allusions in these cryptic verses?

> He it is that destroys the lore, who declares that the Ox and the Sun are the worst thing to behold with the eyes. (*Ys.* $32^{10}$.)
>
> To his (Zarathushtra's) undoing Grehma and the Kavis have long devoted their purposes and energies, for they set themselves to help the False, and that it may be said 'The Ox shall be slain, that it may kindle the Averter of Death to help us'. (Ib. $^{11}$.)
>
> When wilt thou smite the filthiness of this intoxicant, through which the Karapans evilly deceive, and the wicked lords of the lands with purpose fell? (*Ys.* $48^{10}$.)

We have here fierce denunciation of the *daevayasna*, the worship of the old gods, as carried on by the Kavis, chiefs hostile to the Reform, and the Karapans, priests of their worship: Bendva and Grehma were their respective ring-leaders. Now *Dūraoša*, 'Averter of Death,' is the standing epithet of Haoma (the Indian *Soma*) in the Later Avesta. We cannot fail to recognize the Prophet's wrath against the wild nocturnal orgy, primed with maddening drink under religious sanctions, at which the poor husbandmen's cattle were slain 'with shouts of joy' (*Ys.* $32^{12}$). And when we recall the Mithraic *taurobolium*, the sacramental slaying of an ox in commemoration of Mithra's primaeval sacrifice, the probability becomes fairly strong that even Mithra himself was implicated in the denunciation. Of course his name does not appear, nor that of Haoma: the priests who preserved the Gathas would certainly not retain in their worship stanzas that denounced such sacred names, though, as we can see, the names of Mithra and Haoma in the Later Avesta denote very different beings from those which Zarathushtra repudiated. The very silence of the Gathas is evidence enough that the great name of Mithra was not venerated by the Reformer, who could not possibly have been ignorant of it. The gulf between the

Founder and the next stage of the Parsi religion could not more vividly appear. But the real nature of the difference must be reserved for consideration in the next chapter.

We have seen how the 'angels kept not their first estate'. How man began with the wrong choice is enigmatically set forth in this stanza:

> In these sins, we know, Yima was involved, Vivahvant's son, who desiring to satisfy men gave our people flesh of the Ox to eat. (*Ys.* 32[8].)

A few lines above we are told that the demons 'defrauded mankind of happy life and of immortality'. The interpretation of this Fall-story is discussed elsewhere,[1] and only a summary is needed here. Apparently Yima, deceived by the Demons, anticipated the divine gift of the Restoration, and gave his subjects the flesh of the mystic Ox, by which immortality was to be secured. In the full form of the story we should doubtless hear how his action failed to achieve its purpose. The Later Avesta tells us of his punishment.[2] It is evident that Zarathushtra goes into very little detail upon speculative questions as to the beginnings of evil. He finds a house on fire, and he is too much concerned with putting it out to spare much thought for the cause of the conflagration, though he flings out wrathful allusions to the incendiaries whose hand he recognizes.

We turn with him to the doctrine of Sin as it is to-day, and to the punishment that awaits it hereafter. Zarathushtra is not at all precise in his treatment of sin, but the general principles he lays down compensate for the absence of particulars. By far the most fundamental doctrine is that which takes us down to the springs of action, and makes Thought of equal importance with Word and Deed—of greater importance, we should say, since Good Thought is enthroned where Good Word and Deed do not appear. Violence and cruelty, arro-

[1] See *E. Z.*, p. 149. It should be noticed that the interpretation is my own, and I do not wish it to be assumed that it is assured fact.

[2] See further below, p. 71.

gance, and above all falsehood, are expressly condemned; and with the great triad of word, thought, and deed so constantly emphasized, we cannot miss Zarathushtra's intention to include the planning of and longing for such things in the same category as their accomplishment in word and action. How far Zarathushtra's lost teaching amplified the ethical code in detail we of course have no means of knowing.

The Gathas have almost disproportionate space given—so we might say—to the punishments which await Sin in the Hereafter. The Prophet is profoundly convinced that the proclamation of these will turn sinners from their evil way.

> Through this kindly Spirit, Mazdah Ahura, and through the Fire, thou wilt give the division of good to the two parties, with support of Piety and Right.
>
> This verily will convert many who are ready to hear. (*Ys.* 47[6].)

The Fire, here and often in the Gathas, is the ordeal flame, the flood of molten metal (*ayah χšusta*), which is to be poured forth at the last from above, to destroy all evil. Often the word 'metal' is used to express the same idea. According to the later apocalyptic, the righteous are to pass through it as through a stream of warm milk, but the wicked and all pertaining to wickedness will be burnt up. There are various other elements in the imagery of Judgement which Zarathushtra may well have found established in popular mythology before his time. In such cases he retained the imagery where it was in itself harmless and served to make more vivid the truth with which he was concerned. But he apparently took no trouble to correlate these figures, which for him serve only a passing purpose. It would be quite impossible to form from his teaching anything like a consistent picture: each image comes in independently to heighten a moral or spiritual conception and is then dropped. This is of the essence of Apocalyptic, which Zarathushtra was the first great thinker to use as a vehicle for truth; we are very familiar with the principle of interpretation as supplied in the supreme example of apocalyptic, the book that closes the canon of Christian Scripture.

It will be well to take up these apocalyptic figures, that we may see what is the general conception of retribution that Zarathushtra sets forth by their use. The Fire and the Molten Metal are specially concerned with the general judgement. As in Christian eschatology, from the very nature of the subject, it is often impossible to isolate imagery attaching to the End from that pertaining to the individual's destiny. The most conspicuous and picturesque feature in the vision of individual judgement is the Bridge. Much mythological embellishment is found in later Parsi eschatology, and was very probably a survival from Aryan antiquity, in which the idea of a Bridge of Souls was conspicuous.[1] The Bridge may have been suggested by the rainbow or the Milky Way. It was said to rest upon Mount Alburz, and to span the abyss of Hell, its farther end reaching to Paradise. Its most striking characteristic was its expanding into a broad causeway when the righteous passed over, and shrinking into a razor's edge for the wicked, so that they fell down from it into the bottomless pit below. There is an adaptation of this in the Moslem Al Sirat's Arch. It is not found in the Gathas, and the absence is significant. Probably the idea tasted too much of magic for Zarathushtra. He keeps the Bridge, but he gives it a new name, which bears his own unmistakable sign-manual. It is now the Bridge of the Separator (*Cinvato pèrètu*). The 'Separation' between the good and the bad is done in fact before the Bridge is passed. Who is the *Cinvant*? The answer is what we should expect. In *Ys.* $46^{17}$ the Prophet promises his son-in-law Jamaspa to recount his wrongs in Paradise,

> before him who shall separate the wise and the unwise through Right, his prudent counseller, even Mazdah Ahura.

He is to act himself as his people's advocate at the Judgement, and he is himself to be their guide across the Bridge:

> Those whom I impel to your adoration, with all these will I cross the Bridge of the Separator. (*Ys.* $46^{10}$.)

[1] See p. 104.

There is, however, a suggestion of a still more exalted function for him, albeit in a passage the translation of which is not perfectly secure:[1]

> The action, the word and the worship by which I will give for thee Immortality and Right, O Mazdah, and the Dominion of Welfare. (*Ys.* 34[1].)

He will be judge at the last by the message he gives: the thought is like that of John 12[48]. We may put down to a rather later day the sacred formula, in Gathic dialect, in which the community declares that Zarathushtra is to be both Lord (*Ahu*) here and Judge (*ratu*) hereafter.[2] But it is quite explicitly anticipated in another verse of his hymns:

> If by reason of these things the better part is not in sight for the soul, then will I come to you all as the judge of the parties twain, whom Ahura Mazdah knoweth, that we may live according to the Right. (*Ys.* 31[2].)

Mazdah, who will be Lord (*ahu*) at the Resurrection, appoints the Prophet to be Judge (*ratu*). This therefore is quite consistent with the supreme judgeship of Mazdah, and (we may add) with personal humility on the human Prophet's part. He never gives us the impression of making claims for himself. He is utterly lost in his message, and it is entirely as a messenger of Truth that he claims to be appointed Judge at the last. The 'separating' which Mazdah accomplishes before the Bridge is connected with an impressive figure:

> Of thy Fire, O Ahura, that is mighty through Right, promised and powerful, we desire that it may be for the faithful man with manifested delight, but for the enemy with visible torment, according to the pointing of the hand. (*Ys.* 34[4].)

The Fire itself shall declare each man's work. The figure is combined with that of the divine hand pointing in another striking stanza:

> Then shall I recognize thee as strong and holy, Mazdah, when by the hand in which thou thyself dost hold the destinies that thou wilt

[1] See *E. Z.*, p. 361.

[2] See the formula below, p. 42.

assign to the False and the Righteous, by the glow of thy Fire whose power is Right, the might of Good Thought shall come to me. (*Ys.* 43[4].)

Here Good Thought, which in this context means Paradise, comes to the Prophet himself by the 'pointing of the hand'.

Any difficulty which might have been felt as to the apparent coincidence of function between Mazdah and Zarathushtra at the Judgement is discounted further by the appearance of other names yet. In *Ys.* 43[12] Sraosha, 'Obedience,' comes as angel of Judgement—as in the Later Avesta:

followed by treasure-laden Destiny (*Ashi*), who shall render to men severally the destinies of the twofold award.

So here, as in many other places, Mazdah's attributes, described as his fellow-Ahuras, perform a function belonging essentially to God in His unity of nature. This is of course sharply differentiated from the sense in which the human teacher acts as judge, as the stanza just cited will itself show when examined as a whole.[1]

We return to inherited material when we find that merits and demerits were *weighed*, and that the result determined the 'pointings of the hand' and the passage of the Bridge. The idea is fundamental, although there is only one direct mention of it in the Gathas, and the crucial word there has to be rendered by conjecture.

Is the possession of thy good Dominion, Mazdah, is that of thy Destiny assured to me, Ahura? Will thy manifestation, O thou Right, be welcome to the pious, even the weighing of actions by the Good Spirit? (*Ys.* 48[8].)

Our confidence in the presence of this old Aryan and later Avestan idea in the Gathas is confirmed by the presence of an obvious and troublesome corollary. If men go to heaven when their merits outweigh their demerits, and to hell when the scale dips the other way, what about the case when the

[1] This paragraph is repeated from *E. Z.*, p. 169.

balance is even, and there is not even 'the estimation of a hair' between the two scales? Twice this case is presumed.

> According as it is with the laws that belong to the present life, so shall the Judge act with the most just deed towards the man of the Lie, and the man of the Right, and him whose false things and good things balance. (*Ys.* 33[1].)
>
> Whoso, O Mazdah, makes his thought now better, now worse, and likewise his self by action and by word, and follows his own inclinations, wishes, and choices, he shall in thy purpose be in a separate place at the last. (*Ys.* 48[4].)

The recognition of the fact that men are very mixed in their character and achievement leads to a special case which is mentioned and left. Where the 'separate place' is, and how it differs severally from heaven and from hell, we are not told in the extant Gathas: we are not at present concerned with the efforts of later theology to fill up the gap. We shall return to this point later, but we should note here that the weighing of merits and demerits is so characteristic an inherited idea that we should need very distinct evidence to prove that Zarathushtra threw it over. The evidence goes the other way, even if it is not abundant. We compare at once the great principle of Persian jurisprudence whereby an accused person was supposed to be acquitted if his whole record showed a balance of merit.

From this principle, which we shall see is more effective for raising problems than for solving them, we pass on to a contribution of a more original and fruitful kind. The deepest and truest revelation made or adapted by our Sage is the doctrine that a man's Self (*daenā*) determines his future destiny. The doctrine is the more impressive because of its tacit rejection of an inherited dogma which reappears, largely improved upon, in the Later Avesta. The *Fravashi* is a very characteristic concept in Parsi religion, and was there before the Reform. It is easy to see why the fastidious monotheism of the great Prophet rejected it. On one side it was an inheritance from Aryan ancestor-worship, and Zarathushtra knew full well

how great is the danger lest the adoration of saints may lead to a real and gross infringing of the dues of the Only God. On the other, it was an imperfect presentation of a practical psychology on which he laid great stress. The Fravashi was, so to speak, *ex officio* good,[1] and Zarathushtra taught of a Self that was not up in heaven, and conventionally endowed with virtue, but down among men, fighting its battle, the result of which was no foregone conclusion. So he developed in its place a profound doctrine of an Ego that was the very man—his body and mind only the tenement it inhabited, itself the centre and cause of the man's moral growth or declension. This Self makes our future, and if the Hand points downward to the quaking sinner by the Bridge, it is only the endorsement of a doom the Self has pronounced before.

> Their own Soul and their own Self shall torment them when they come to the Bridge of the Separator. To all time will they be guests for the House of the Lie. (*Ys.* $46^{11}$.)

We quoted just now[2] the passage in which the wavering man

> makes his Thought now better, now worse, and even so his Self by deed and word.

And as the Self is so is the man's future. The man of Bad Thought can cry with Milton's Satan

> Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
> And in the lowest deep a lower deep
> Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
> To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.

Wholly in the spirit of the Founder is the beautiful conception of the Later Avesta, by which the angel or devil that comes to meet the deceased man's soul, as it flies forth upon its last journey, is the Self, in form of lovely maiden or hideous hag, made fairer or fouler by every act, word or thought of the man in his earthly life.

[1] See below, p. 103. [2] See p. 36.

Naturally the Gathas have not a little of the more obvious portrayal of the horrors of Retribution. The figures used are partly the same as those in the Bible. Fire cannot be turned into a parable of torment quite so readily, since it is so very sacred a symbol. But the stanza quoted above (*Ys.* $43^4$)[1] is not far from the Old Testament phrase about the 'everlasting burnings' which symbolize God's awful holiness. The Gathic hell is 'the Worst Existence', 'the House of the Lie', or 'of Worst Thought'. It is full of darkness, and sad voices, stench, foul food. One typical verse will suffice.

> But those that are of an evil dominion, of evil deeds, evil words, evil Self, and evil thought, men of the Lie, the Souls go forth to meet them with foul food: in the House of the Lie they shall be meet inhabitants. (*Ys.* $49^{11}$.)

And how long is this retribution to last? We put out of sight, as throughout this chapter, the glosses of the Later Avesta, even though they may have claims to be right, and set down only what we find actually written in the Gathas. And with that limitation we can only say that there seems to be no thought of any end.

> In immortality shall the soul of the righteous be happy, in perpetuity the torments of the man of the Lie. (*Ys.* $45^7$.)

But these two words (*amərətāt* and *utayūiti*) are constant correlatives, and no real distinction can be drawn between them. The phrase 'to all time' (*vīspai yavōi*) is even more explicit: it is applied once to the retribution and elsewhere to reward. It would perhaps be going too far to assert that Zarathushtra would have dogmatically laid down the absolutely unending duration of the torments of the damned, especially if confronted with the admitted fact that many of them missed heaven only by a very narrow balance when their merits and demerits were weighed. His imagery leaves no room for any gradations of punishment. In all this of course he is only failing as all other thinkers have failed. It

[1] See p. 35.

is no part of a Prophet's function to satisfy curiosity about the duration or character of penalties incurred by persistent rebellion against God's high commands. The very effort to think out a consistent and absolutely just system of retribution, even by ourselves who have the incomparably brighter light that the Gospel brings, only shows how utterly beyond human power it is even to understand such a system if it were revealed to us. Three thinkable alternatives are before us, and we cannot with all our speculation make either unending torment, annihilation, or universal restoration solve a tithe of the problems that even our limited intelligence raises. Practically the three alternatives work out as symbols, which come to the front successively as we are laying stress on the appalling heinousness of sin, the impossibility of life in the absence of God, or on the other hand the certainty of an ultimate victory that is worthy of Almighty Love. From this point of view we should say that Zarathushtra was so entirely occupied with the thought of the inexcusable wickedness of rebellion, that he never stopped to think out any mitigations, or any considerations drawn from his own knowledge of God which might suggest the very possibility of a term to the punishment of men who rose up against Him.

The question of duration naturally does not arise when we turn to the future of the righteous. Those who are accounted worthy to attain to that life could not be imagined losing that bliss while God Himself endures. Zarathushtra heaps up phrases describing the 'Best Thought', the 'Best Existence', 'the House of Song'. The superlative adjective in its splendid simplicity, *Vahištèm*, the Best, was the term that was destined to last longest. But *Garo dèmāna*, House of Song (*Garonmana* in Later Avestan), is the most conspicuous and picturesque of the terms applied to heaven, 'the homeland of music,' in Christina Rossetti's beautiful phrase, the place of the New Song, as our own Scripture portrays it. There are fine images drawn from light—'the felicity that is with the heavenly lights', 'the Dominion where

the sun shines'. And in the twin conceptions of Welfare or Salvation and Immortality we have the positive and the negative sides of the Future Life, in which 'they shall not die any more', and life shall be one of perfect 'wholeness'.[1] The twin blessing answers beautifully to those promised by Christ—'I came that they might have life, and might have abundance'.[2] The total absence of sensual delights is conspicuous in contrast with the system of future blessedness already conceived in those days. There is no feasting, and no Houris. Even the nectar and ambrosia that came down with the old Aryan picture of the Hereafter seem to be studiously set in the background, lest they should be taken literally, and so spoil the purely spiritual heaven to which the Seer loved to point.

Before we pass on to examine Zarathushtra's hopes for the world, there is one other aspect of the individual's future which needs to be mentioned. We shall find to our surprise, later on in our inquiry, that earnest and orthodox followers of Zarathushtra have fallen under the spell of the most universal and mischievous of India's delusions, the doctrine of Reincarnation. They urge that we have only a fraction of Zarathushtra's teaching, and no one can say what doctrines may have failed to survive. That may be admitted; but so great a thinker must have been consistent, and a purely hypothetical lost doctrine may not flatly contradict the teaching that does survive. Since the Gathas wholly ignore the Fravashis, whose pre-existence is made the basis of this unhappy superstructure, the possibilities of a plausible case are clearly not rosy. It will be enough here to point out that the Gathas leave no possible opening. The Self is, as we have seen, the determining factor. It has been developing constantly under the reaction of words and thoughts and deeds. At the end of life, before the Bridge, the future

[1] *Haurvatāt*, Skt. *sarvatāt*, is etymologically identical with ὁλότης, and its radical adjective is one with *salvus*, whence 'Salvation'.

[2] John $10^{10}$ (so read).

destiny is awarded according to the character of the record. The 'Twofold Award' is heaven and hell, with an indeterminate 'separate place' for those whose merits and demerits balance. Into what hopeless confusion does the whole system fall if the soul is recalled from heaven or hell, or from the Bridge before it enters them, to live again in another body, unconscious of its past, and building up another and quite independent Self! Those who really defer to the authority of their Founder should have more reverence than to force into his system an alien speculation, for which the Gathas give no hint in favour, but deny implicitly in every element of their theology.

We have already indicated some of the lines that make the Gathic picture of the world's future. The centre of it is the certainty of victory for the forces of Good. A general resurrection of the just seems to be a part of 'the Great Consummation', and it is apparently a resurrection of the body. For it is Aramaiti who 'gave continued life of their bodies, and indestructibility' (*Ys.* 30[7]), who 'will give us a peaceful dwelling, will give permanence and power' (*Ys.* 48[6]). Now Aramaiti inherits some features of an old Aryan Earth-spirit, having indeed apparently received the connotation of 'Piety' by popular etymology.[1] This makes Professor Williams Jackson's suggestion very convincing, that when the spirit who watches over the earth thus gives new life to men's bodies, we are to recognize a bodily resurrection of those who 'sleep in the dust of the earth'. For it must be remembered that the horror of polluting the sacred earth with a corpse is purely Magian, and unknown even to the Persian

[1] The history of the word in *E. Z.*, p. 112, n. 3, is accepted by Dr. Louis H. Gray. It is that *arā mātar* was an Indo-Iranian name for Mother Earth: the Greek ἔραζε, 'earthwards,' is compared, and our *earth*, which is a conflation of this old word with the distinct name *Nerthus*, an earth-spirit in Tacitus. In that case *arā mātar* was confused with a name for 'right thinking', antitheses of which are found in Gathic *pairimaiti* 'perversity', *tarāmaiti* 'heresy'. On the basis of the assertion that Aramaiti really does represent the Earth in Vedic as well as in Avesta, see *E. Z.*, p. 10 f.

until the Magi had established their footing through many generations.[1] It is much more like Zarathushtra to use the very opposite imagery, and portray the abounding energy of the Spirit of Piety as restoring life to the dead that are folded to her bosom.

Apart from the apocalyptic imagery of the Fire and the Molten Metal, we find in the Gathas the most fundamental hope for the world's future based on a principle thoroughly characteristic of the system. If the salvation of an individual depends on his accumulating merits enough to outweigh demerits, the salvation of the world should be achieved in the same way. The final victory of Ahura Mazdah comes by the predominance of good words, works, and thoughts in the world. This thought is apparently enshrined in the *Honover* (*Ahuna Vairya*), one of the two most sacred formulae of the Parsi religion, and datable probably in the generation immediately following Zarathushtra. Its meaning may best be given in a paraphrase[2]:

> As here our chosen Master he,
> By Right he there our Judge shall be.[3]
> Life-works that from Good Thought arise
> He offers to the Only Wise,
> To the great Lord his Kingdom sure,
> Who made him shepherd of the poor.

The 'life-works of Good Thought' are the merits of the pious which their divinely appointed teacher has prompted: they are presented to Mazdah, and when his treasury is full they ensure the coming of his Kingdom. So in *Ys.* 49[10].

> And this, O Mazdah, will I put in thy care within thy House, the Good Thought and the souls of the righteous, their worship, their Piety and zeal, that thou mayst guard it, O thou of mighty Dominion, with abiding power.

It is the Prophet's own function then to keep watch over

[1] See below, p. 63.
[2] For a prose rendering and discussion, see *E. Z.*, p. 160 f., and below, p. 89, n. 2.
[3] See above, p. 34.

this heavenly treasury, to plead for his people that nothing of their merits be lost, and this not merely for the salvation of the pious themselves but for the establishing of the Dominion of Mazdah in the world. By this and by his preaching of the truth he claims to be among 'those who will deliver' the world. Into this most important term *saošyant* (future participle of the verb 'benefit, deliver') we must now look in detail, beginning with a list of the Gathic passages that contain it. We take first its occurrences in the singular:

> Let the revelation of Good Thought be confirmed unto me: the future deliverer should know how his own destiny shall be. (*Ys.* $48^{9}$.)
>
> Then let them seek the pleasure of Mazdah, even the Kavi Vishtaspa, and Zarathushtra's son the Spitama, and Frashaoshtra, making straight the paths for the Religion of the future deliverer which Ahura ordained. (*Ys.* $53^{2}$.)
>
> Whoso therefore in the future lightly esteemeth the Daevas and those mortals who lightly esteem him (Zarathushtra) .... unto him shall the holy Self of the future deliverer as Lord of the house, be friend, brother or father, O Mazdah Ahura. (*Ys.* $45^{11}$.)

Other instances are plural:

> When, Mazdah, shall the sunrisings come forth for the world's winning of Right, through the powerful teachings of the wisdom of the future deliverers? Who are they to whose help Good Thought shall come? (*Ys.* $46^{3}$.)
>
> Teach us that way of Good Thought, O Ahura, of which thou didst speak to me, whereon, a way well made by Right, the Selves of the future deliverers shall pass to the reward that was prepared for the wise, of which thou art determinant, O Mazdah. (*Ys.* $34^{13}$.)
>
> These shall be the deliverers of the provinces, who follow after pleasing, O Good Thought, by their actions, O Right, depending on thy command, O Mazdah. For these are the appointed smiters of Violence. (*Ys.* $48^{12}$.)

Closely akin is the thought of another passage, which brings in a conception very prominent in later days:

> So may we be those that make this world advance. O Mazdah and ye other Ahuras,[1] gather together the Assembly, and thou too the Right, that thoughts may meet where Wisdom is at home. (*Ys.* $30^{9}$.)

[1] On this see above, p. 23.

(The abstract noun of this verbal phrase, 'make—advance', is a technical term in later times for the Renovation of all things, the *Frašokèrèti*.) We ought also to add a passage referring to Jamaspa, where another part of the verb appears from which *Saošyant* comes:

> Let the helper hear the ordinances, he that is created to bring deliverance. (*Ys.* 49[9].)

Now we can easily deduce from these passages what this very simple term means in the Gathas. It is no technical language. The last of the six apparently has not even a religious meaning: the 'future deliverers of the provinces' are in this context simply those who are about to take up arms against robber hordes of nomads, in obedience to the will of Mazdah as declared by his Prophet. In the other five places those who are to be 'deliverers' or 'benefactors' are to perform this task at the Great Consummation, which it seems was destined to come soon, in Zarathushtra's expectation. The Saoshyant is speaking in his own person: his tremendous conviction of the truth he has been commissioned to teach assures him that by that gospel he will benefit the world. But he does not arrogate the position to himself alone: he joins with himself his helpers who are bearing the burden with him, of whom he is always speaking in tones of warm and generous affection. The subsequent history of the Saoshyant idea will engage our special attention later.

The picture of the Benefactor or Deliverer that is to be prepares us for a general estimate of the work of the great Reformer, his methods, and his message. One fact about him stands out in strong relief, his evangelistic zeal. We shall see before this book closes why it is so important to emphasize what might seem very obvious and wholly natural: a prophet who does not supremely care about putting his message before men does not deserve so great and sacred a title. The whole tone of the Gathas is the proof of this claim for him. If he is not magnificently missionary, why is he contending almost despairingly with cruel foes, why does he press so eagerly

upon unwilling ears a truth which is for the blessing of others, instead of quietly enjoying it by himself? No one could read the Gathas without carrying away before everything else the impression of a man who is spending and being spent for the blessing of other men. One or two of his own words may be quoted:

> Through this word of promise on our tongue we will turn the robber horde unto the Greatest. (*Ys.* $28^5$.)

The 'word of promise' is *manthra*, a term destined to revert to the baser use of a mere spell: it is the Indian *mantram*. Zarathushtra's 'spell' is the promise of heaven, described in the first part of the stanza, by which he hopes to convert the wild nomads.

> What award thou givest to the two parties (believers and unbelievers) .... do thou tell us, O Mazdah, that we may know even with the tongue of thine own mouth, that I may convert all living men. (*Ys.* $31^3$.)
>
> If an understanding man should be able to hold one who comes over from his vow and his ties of faith, himself having brought him thereto, and living after the ordinance, a righteous man (converting) a man of the Lie—then shall he tell it to the nobles, that they may protect him from injury, O Mazdah Ahura. (*Ys.* $46^5$.)
>
> Through this holy Spirit, Mazdah Ahura, and through the Fire, thou wilt give the division of good to the two parties, with support of Piety and Right. This verily will convert many who are ready to hear. (*Ys.* $47^6$.)

The lines of his preaching may be easily constructed afresh from our knowledge of the barbarians whose descendants roam the same regions to-day, and behave in the same fashion towards peaceful agricultural folk, especially if there is the excuse of religious apostasy available. Islam to-day for the Afghan or Baluci may have substituted Allah for Mithra, and Muhammad for the old prophets of the *Daevayasna*; but the ethical consequences of the change are negligible, and the treatment of one who renounces a creed which has no restraining influence on conduct, absolutely the same as it was in the old days. It was at the risk, not merely of contempt and

neglect, but of losing life itself, that Zarathushtra held out the promise of treasure in heaven for those who would forsake their evil ways, practise the farmer's honest and beneficial industry, and cling to truth, to kindness and obedience to God in word, thought, and deed. How far such promises attracted such people we have no means of knowing. That there was a period of almost total failure, during which he toiled on with few followers and small earthly provision, pathetically pleading for some immediate earnest of the blessing he knew awaited him and his people hereafter, we have seen already in Gathic passages quoted in confirmation of the historical character of the story.[1] It does not seem that success came until he met the enlightened chieftain Vishtaspa, who lent a ready ear to his propaganda and brought the new creed into the light of court favour. It is likely enough that the practical advocacy of agriculture appealed to the king, who welcomed a strong religious sanction for a social reform of high promise. For though we see most of the abstract and theological side of Zarathushtra's teaching, we must never overlook the fact that he was before all things practical. Very few philosophers in all history have shown any capacity for practical life; there is something almost innate in abstract thought which alienates men from useful work. But Zarathushtra's greatness comes out amazingly in the fact that he could think deeply on the greatest of themes, and then turn to the practical care of cattle. Vishtaspa may or may not have understood the lore of the Ameshaspands, but he could see the value of the new teaching for the building up of a prosperous and contented community.

The community, however, was unfortunately not located on a fertile island, protected from envious neighbours by the encircling sea. There was Bendva to be reckoned with, typical chief of nomads like the modern Kurd, and the

[1] See above, pp. 11, 16.

fanatical priest of the *Daevayasna*, one Grehma, who stirred up the cupidity of these Huns to raid Vishtaspa's land in the name of the old gods whom Vishtaspa and Zarathushtra had banished. Vishtaspa defended his people by force of arms, and his spiritual father seems to have spurred him on even before he was inclined to such a course. We cannot condemn the great teacher for advocating the use of carnal weapons in the defence of religious truth. It was altogether defensive warfare, in protection of life and property, and there is no reason whatever for suggesting that he would have looked with anything but horror upon any attempt to propagate faith by the sword, or by persecution of any kind. We may quote two passages in which generous indignation for his oppressed people blazes out.

> Let none of you listen to the words and commands of the man of the Lie: he brings house and clan and district and land into misery and destruction. Resist them then with weapon! (*Ys.* $31^{18}$.)

The other extract is from the last lines of the last Gatha, a rather sombre ode which celebrates the marriage of Jamaspa and Pourucista, the Prophet's daughter:

> So they whose deeds are evil, let them be the deceived, and let them all howl, abandoned to ruin. Through good rulers let him bring death and bloodshed upon them, and peace from their assaults unto the happy clansmen. Grief let him bring on them, he that is greatest, with the bond of death, and soon let it be.
>
> To men of evil creed belongs the place of corruption. They that set themselves to contemn the worthy, despising righteousness, forfeiting their own body,—where is the righteous lord who shall rob them of life and freedom? Thine, Mazdah, is the Dominion, whereby thou canst give to the right-living poor man the better portion. (*Ys.* $53^{8-9}$.)

The reference to the poor in this last stanza recalls a characteristic of the Reformer, his intense feeling for the lowly. We have already seen how the title 'shepherd of the poor' was given him in the most sacred formula of the later religion.[1] His championship cost him dangerous opposition.

[1] See above, p. 42.

Ever hath Bendva opposed me, my greatest (foe), because I desire to win through Right men that are neglected, O Mazdah. (*Ys.* 49[1].)

He was full of deep sympathy with men because he lived much with God. There is an unmistakable note of intimacy in the appeals he makes to Mazdah.

I cry unto thee, see thou to it, Ahura, granting me support as friend gives to friend. (*Ys.* 46[2].)

To all eternity we would be (thy) beloved. (*Ys.* 49[8].)

The prophet[1] Zarathushtra, who as thy friend, O Mazdah and the Right, lifts up his voice with worship. (*Ys.* 50[6].)

O Mazdah, might one like thee teach it to his friend such as I am, and through friendly Right give us support, that Good Thought may come unto us. (*Ys.* 44[1].)

Such intimacy, however, has not lessened the profound reverence with which Zarathushtra comes before God. There is, as we should expect, very little emphasis upon external or ceremonial religion. Once we read of a sacrifice:

To thee and to Right we will offer the sacrifice with due service, that in the Kingdom ye may bring all creatures to perfection through Good Thought. (*Ys.* 34[8].)

The word used (*myazda*) denotes an offering of food, which we may assume was laid out upon a carpet of tender grass in the old Aryan fashion described by Herodotus in his picture of Persian worship.[2] Once we hear of Zarathushtra's officiating as priest (*zaotar*): the word never occurs again, and it involves a function that needed no hereditary qualification. But if sacrifice still survives, as it does under strict surveillance in the Prophets of Israel, praise is familiar and constant. By praise, the overflow of grateful hearts, men learn best what God is and how they should live for Him. The Hymns out of which we have been drawing our portraiture of the religion are carefully fashioned for the purpose of praise. Let us close our attempt to depict one of the

[1] *Manthara*, one who utters a *manthra*, on which see above, p. 45. The term is in the Gathas used only of Zarathushtra.

[2] Quoted in *E. Z.*, p. 394.

greatest of God's Gentile servants by quoting him as he stands before the Wise Lord:

May the Creator of Wisdom teach me his ordinances through Good Thought, that my tongue may have a pathway.

For you I will harness the swiftest steeds, stout and strong, by the prompting of your praise, that ye may come hither, O Mazdah, Right and Good Thought. May ye be ready for my help!

With verses that are recognized as those of pious zeal I will come before you with outstretched hands, before you, O thou Right, with the worship of the faithful man, before you with the capacity of Good Thought.

With these prayers I would come and praise you, O Mazdah and Right, with actions of Good Thought. If I be master of my own destiny as I will, then will I take thought for the portion of the wise in the same.

Those actions that I shall achieve, and those done aforetime, and those, O Good Thought, that are precious in the sight, the rays of the sun, the bright uprisings of the days, all is for your praise, O Right and Mazdah Ahura.

Your praiser, Mazdah, will I declare myself and be, so long, O Right, as I have strength and power. May the Creator of the world accomplish through Good Thought its fulfilment and all that most perfectly answers to his will! (*Ys.* $50^{6-11}$.)

## APPENDIX

One or two specimens of the Gathas may be given in verse form, so as to reproduce to some extent the impression of the original. They are quoted from the writer's contribution to the commemorative volume in honour of Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar (Poona, 1917).

(1) *Yasna* $31^{1-8}$.

1. Mindful of the heavenly calling, we the words of Truth assert:
   Hard the words, when Falsehood's followers Right's domain conspire to hurt;
   Welcome words, when to the Wisest willing men their mind convert.

2. If for all this truthful teaching souls to higher things are blind,
   Come I to you, good and evil, Judge by Mazdah's will assigned,
   Set to order Life's Renewal, that the Right its way may find.

3. Tell us, Wisest, let us know it, be the word from thine own tongue,
By thy Fire and by thy Spirit what thou dealst to right and wrong:
What thy true decision tell me—to convert mankind I long.

4. For the prayer to Right and Mazdah and whatever Lords there be,
Destiny and Duty invoking, Best Thought, do thou seek for me
Heaven's All Might, for war with Falsehood, so to win the victory.

5. Show me then, O Right, my portion, heaven-ordained, that I may know,
Fixed my mind and wary ever, though men grudge that it be so:
Tell what shall be, what shall not be—Wisest Lord, thy wisdom show.

6. He that as a man of knowledge hath the skill true words to rede,
Heir of Utmost Good, that redes me Weal and Right and Life Indeed,
His the Wisest Lord's Dominion, which Good Thought for him shall speed.

7. His the primal thought, ordaining 'Let the blest worlds teem with light';
His the craftsman hand that stablished, Wisest Lord, the heavenly Right.
Changeless aye thy Spirit, enriching homes for Goodness in the height.

8. Thee as First, thee Last—my soul's grasp fastened on the mystery;
Father of Good Thought, thou camest to the seeing of my eye:
Author sole of Right, thou judgest deeds of our mortality.

(2) *Yasna* $44^{1-5}$.

1. This I ask thee—tell me truly, tell me duly, Holy Lord—
How to worship with a service worthy thee, O King adored.
Teach me, Wise One, as the heavenly may the earthly, as to friend
Friend may speak—so may the kindly Right his timely succour bring,
And with heaven's Good Thought to usward in his gracious power descend.

2. Tell me duly, tell me truly, as I pray, O Holy King—
When the Highest Life is dawning, at thy Kingdom's opening,
Shall the dooms of heaven's tribunal give to every man his due?
Surely he, the holy prophet, to his watchful soul doth lay
All men's sin, yet ever friendly doth the worlds of life renew.

3. This I ask thee—tell me truly, tell me duly as I pray:
Who the Sire from whose begetting Right was on Creation Day?
Who their several paths appointed where the Sun and Stars should go?
By whose power is yon moon waxing, by that power again to wane?
These things, Wisest, I am yearning, these and more beside to know.

4. This I ask thee, Lord of Wisdom—truly make the mystery plain:
Who this world, beneath, above us, safe from falling did sustain,
Nether Earth, and vault of Heaven? Who the Waters hath upborne,
Who the Plant-world? Who yoked swiftness to the clouds and to the wind?
Who is he, O Wise Creator, from whose soul Good Thought was born!

5. Tell me truly as I ask thee—Lord, illuminate my mind:
Light and Darkness, who hath made them? who such wondrous skill could find?
Who the hours of sleep and waking hath ordained with wisest skill,
Dawn of day, and noon's refreshment, and the late approach of eve,
Set to call the man of knowledge hests of duty to fulfil?

(3) *Yasna* 47.

1. By his kind Spirit, by Best Thought and Deed
And Word, with Right, the Wise Lord gives his meed
Through Power and Piety—Weal and Life Indeed.

2 This kindliest Spirit's Best one doth fulfil
With tongue by Goodness' words, with hand by will
Of Piety's lore: Mazdah Right's Sire is still.

3. Blest Father of the Spirit that hath made
Luck-bearing Cattle, and its peaceful glade
By the kind Mother, through the Good Thought's aid.

4. From this have fallen the Lovers of the Lie,
Not so the Right's men. Rich or poor, may I
To these show love, to those show enmity.

5. Thy promised Best, by this kind Spirit due
To men of Right—Lord, is't thy will a crew
Of Liars enjoy it, Ill Thought's comrades true?

6. Through this kind Spirit, Lord and by thy Fire,
With Right and Piety, thou giv'st both their hire.
Sure this shall turn all who the truth desire!

# CHAPTER 3

## AFTER ZARATHUSHTRA

Xanthus the Lydian says that six hundred years passed between Zoroaster and the invasion of Xerxes; and that after him there was a long succession of Magi, with names like Ostanes, Astrampsychus, Gobryas, and Pazates, up to the conquest of the Persians by Alexander.—DIOGENES.[1]

THE Gathas, which have engaged our attentions exclusively so far, are a very small part of the *Avesta*, the sacred book of the Parsis. How much of the remainder was worthy of being packed up in the 'treasures' of the Magi will become clearer as we go on: since the whole of this book forms the canon of the Parsi faith throughout its last sixteen centuries, we are necessarily bound to examine it very carefully.

The Parsi Canon has a curious surface relation to the Jewish, in that it includes everything that survives in an extinct sacred language. This is of course only the objective fact, and must not be taken as suggesting the reason. The Jews took no trouble to preserve the archaic Hebrew of books which in Palestine they did not regard as representative of their religion.[2] The Parsis were assisted in their selection by other forces. Alexander is said to have burnt an Avesta which, according to Hermippus (third century B. C.), extended to two million lines. If Hermippus wrote of what he had seen, it is obvious that Alexander did not destroy the only copy. And indeed we may reasonably cherish some scepticism as to Alexander's alleged anticipation of German ways with

[1] See *E. Z.*, p. 410.

[2] The fragments of Ben-Sira should be conscientiously chronicled as an exception proving the rule.

a library. It was not at all like him, unless wine had used the wand of Circe: his father, it may be admitted, was proverbially a different man drunk and sober. Leaving indeterminate the question whether the chivalrous and cultured genius lapsed for this occasion into an act extraordinarily unworthy of him, we may go on to note that the vicissitudes of the Arsacid era undeniably reduced the quantity of old material very seriously indeed, while the Moslem conquest of Persia ultimately came very near destroying it all. Our extant catalogues of the contents of the Avesta in the Sassanian age show that we have lost an immense mass of texts. The description of this lost material, accessible especially in Dastur Darab's monumental edition of the *Dinkard*,[1] does not enable us to decide whether we have to blame or bless the memory of 'the accursed Sikander', or anonymous successors, who so largely reduced the bulk of what we are bound to read.

With this summary we may dismiss the question of the lost Avestan texts, since in this book we are not concerned with mere archaeology. The extant Avesta will give us quite enough to study, and it is the extant Avesta to which the present-day Parsi must perforce make his appeal.

The history of the term Avesta is much disputed and may not be decisively cleared up. It probably denotes the original text, of which the 'Zend' was an interpretation. The term Zend was often used in the West as a name for the Avestan language, but has now been abandoned as incorrect—which is regrettable, for its convenience is obvious. The 'Zend-Avesta' is still the name for the book itself, even in the translation to which English students are restricted, that by Mills and Darmesteter in *Sacred Books of the East.*

What is said here about the Avesta must be limited strictly to information needed by a student desirous of following up purely religious questions: matters of literary history and

[1] The sixteenth volume bears the date 1917 (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.).

interpretation must be sought elsewhere.[1] The most practical question emerging is one which should logically have taken its place at the beginning of last chapter. The Avesta is in a dead language, known only to a small company of Western Orientalists, and to a strangely small number of the Parsis, who venerate it as Scripture. How can an investigator interested in religious questions only, unable to spare time for the complex and difficult study of Avestan dialect, obtain reliable data for his purpose? The answer is not very satisfactory. For the Later Avesta the translation of Mills and Darmesteter (1887–95) is generally trustworthy, but it needs checking. Geldner's critical text of the original has appeared since the version was completed; and the lexical studies of the past twenty years have made very considerable differences in the rendering of numerous passages.[2] In the Gathas the matter is more serious. Professor Mills knows the native tradition better than any one in East or West; and when we can understand his English, we get the best approximation to the meaning as it is accepted by the Parsis to-day. But whether it is Zarathushtra's meaning is quite another matter. No one who would study the Gathas critically can ignore the translation by Bartholomae,[3] whose Lexicon of the old Iranian languages is the indispensable tool of all scholars. The results of Bartholomae's labours have been made accessible for the Later Avesta in Wolff's translation of the whole text.[4] It is not an independent work, but a rendering of the Later

[1] A summary will be found in *E. R. P. P.*, at the end of which is a brief bibliography.

[2] I might mention a rather serious example. A pioneer scholar, investigating points of contact between the ideas of Buddhism and Parsism, sent me a very neat parallel for the Buddhist 'Wheel of the Law'. It was there, to be sure, in *S. B. E.*, but reference to Geldner's text showed that another reading was adopted on preponderant evidence, and the parallel vanished.

[3] *Die Gatha's des Awesta.* Zarathushtra's Verspredigten, übersetzt von Christian Bartholomae. Strassburg, 1905.

[4] *Avesta.* Die heiligen Bücher der Parsen, übersetzt, auf der Grundlage von Chr. Bartholomae's Altiranischem Wörterbuch, von Fritz Wolff. Strassburg, 1910.

Avesta according to Bartholomae's views as stated in his dictionary. The lexicographer takes full account of the Parsi tradition, as well as of the philological researches of the past forty years, in which he has taken a large part. His results are startlingly different from those of his predecessors in a great many places, especially in the Gathas. But one who like the present writer has had occasion to compare them in detail with those of other scholars, cannot resist the impression that he is far more often right than wrong.[1]

A brief sketch of the contents of the extant Avesta should be supplied before we go on to look into its history from the religious point of view. As the reader of the previous chapter has observed, the Hymns of Zarathushtra are embedded in the Yasna, 'worship,' a sort of prayer-book, in which the Hymns are numbered as chapters (Hā). The five Gathas are Hâs 28–34, 43–46, 47–50, 51, and 53. Hâs 35–42 are the 'Gatha of Seven *Hâs*' (*Gatha Haptanghaiti*), now divided into eight sections. This is in prose, but in the Gathic dialect, and presumably much older than the Later Avesta in general, the dialect of which is decidedly of less archaic character. The rest of the Yasna consists of miscellaneous prayers, with *yazamaide*, 'we worship,' recurrent. There are also pieces that seem to belong rather to the *Yashts*, the next great division of the Avesta. These are twenty-one pieces, some of them very long, in praise of angels, as regularized Parsi doctrine calls them: *Yazata*, 'worshipful,' *yašti* (Yasht), 'songs of worship,' and *yasna* are all from the same root *yaz* (Skt. *yaj*, Greek ἄζομαι, ἅγιος). The rest of the *Khordah Avesta* (Little Avesta) includes the *Afringān*, ritual pieces of a rather miscellaneous kind; *Sirozah*, invocations to the *yazata* who preside over the thirty days of the month, *Nyāyish*, petitions to powers of nature, and *Gāhs*, prayers for the five divisions of the day. A small section stands by itself, the *Visparad*,

[1] Quotations from the Gathas in Chapter 1 are made with slight variations from my own translation in *E. Z.*, pp. 343–90. As stated there, the rendering most frequently follows Bartholomae.

twenty-four pieces in honour of heavenly 'authorities' (ratu). The third great section is the *Vīdevdāt* (Vendidad), the Leviticus of the Parsi canon, with minor allied texts, mostly fragmentary. The relative bulk of these sections may be expressed by pages of Wolff's translation, in which pages are $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ in., with only a line or two of references at the foot. The Yasna (without the Five Gathas) occupies 102 pages, the Yashts 146, the Videvdat 123, and the rest only 57 in all. Wolff unfortunately does not include the fragments, which Geldner did not print in the great critical edition: Darmesteter accordingly has in the English version a considerable amount of matter which cannot be found in the later translation.

There is in addition to the Avestan text a great mass of literature which might be called deuterocanonical. It is written in Middle Persian, or Pahlavi, the language of Persia between about the third century B.C. and the Moslem conquest. It is a language of great difficulty because of the extremely imperfect script in which it is written: when the same character may stand for two dozen different combinations of sounds, the outsider naturally wonders whether any reliable translation is possible. An authoritative account (in English) of Pahlavi literature is given by the greatest of all students, the late Dr E. W. West, in Geiger and Kuhn's *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, vol. 2. Dr West translated a number of important Pahlavi treatises in *Sacred Books of the East*, where they were allowed five volumes out of the forty-nine, the Avesta having three. Parsi scholars are busy adding to the tale. The value of the literature mainly depends on its preserving lost Avestan material. Some of it is interesting in itself, such as the treatise *Bundahishn*, which gives a very curious account of cosmogony and the primitive history of man, with the events of the end of all things. But speaking generally, and with no sort of claim to judge except from the English of the texts which such a scholar as West thought worthy of selection, the present writer can pretend no regret that other studies have made Pahlavi an unattainable luxury.

We return to the Avesta, to delineate briefly the course of Zarathushtra's religion after he passed away. The reconstruction of the history is necessarily a work of inductive hypothesis, and the writer can only set down his own view, referring to his other work for the argument in its favour.[1] After sketching this interpretation, we shall let the Later Avesta speak for itself, and the reader may judge of the relation between its religious standpoint and that of the Gathas.

The history will in any case start from the 'seven chapter Gatha', which is marked out by its dialect from the Later Avesta, and set with the Gathas proper. We may set aside the first two stanzas of *Ys.* 35, and the whole of *Ys.* 42, which are later introduction and conclusion, needing separate treatment. There is a significant trace of a marked difference of form: in one of the pieces there are two fragments of verse, and instead of the complicated metres of Zarathushtra's hymns, we have the simple octosyllable quatrain which is ubiquitous in the Later Avesta, and practically identical with the more developed *Çloka* of Indian Epic. We do not find Zarathushtra named, which makes it somewhat unsafe to assume with Professor Bartholomae that he is addressed in one line where an unexplained 'thou' occurs. His own special creations, Right, Good Thought, Dominion, and Piety, are prominent: Welfare

[1] There has unfortunately been little possibility of discussion upon the central thesis of my *Early Zoroastrianism*. Iranists are lamentably few in Britain and America, and between us and the experts across the Rhine the great gulf opened only a few months after the book appeared. I value all the more heartily the support I have received from Bishop Casartelli and Dr Louis H. Gray. From an expert in an allied subject, Prof. A. Berriedale Keith, I have received a criticism of my theory of the Magi in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, suffering somewhat from overmuch *ipse dixit*, but helpful in its contributions from the Indian side. In restating briefly my account of the Magi (which is repeated in my article upon the subject in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*), I shall take into consideration not only Prof. Keith's points, but the remarkable independent researches of Dr D. B. Spooner, whose sensational discoveries at Patna have started profoundly interesting hypotheses as to the part the Magi played in early Indian history. A lecture of mine on Dr Spooner's work, delivered in Bombay University, is included in my little book of addresses entitled *The Teaching of Zarathushtra* (Bombay, 1916).

and Immortality are not mentioned. These conceptions for the first time receive the collective name which becomes technical in all the Later Avesta and other documents of Parsi religion. The stanza should be quoted:

> So now we adore the Good Ones, male and female, the Holy Immortals, ever living, ever increasing, who, male and female, abide by Good Thought. (*Ys.* 39[8].)

Now these abstractions in the Gathas have gender, but no sex; the first three of them are grammatically neuter, and those (Aramaiti, Haurvatat, and Amèrètat) which are grammatically feminine are no more female than the others are male.[1] In the 'Seven Chapters' all is changed. The neuters have become masculine, the feminines definitely female. And no one would think of describing them as anything but real divinities, or archangels at least. For the rest, the influence of the Prophet is seen in the ubiquity of his concepts; and their progress towards the position they occupy later is apparently combined with unconsciousness that it involved departure from the Founder's spirit. There is stereotyping of epithets, though not yet the epithets which are fixed in the later phraseology. We have other genuine characteristics of the Prophet's system. The *Daena*, Self, is conspicuous, and the Two Worlds, corporeal and spiritual. And beyond everything, the transcendence of Ahura Mazdah is unquestioned:

> Who created cattle and Right, created the Waters and the good Plants, created the Light and the Earth and all that is good. (*Ys.* 37[1].)

But what are we to say of this?

> We adore this Earth, with the Wives, which bears us, and we adore those elect ones through Aša who are thy wives, O Ahura Mazdah. (*Ys.* 38[1].)

The next stanza is in adoration of abstractions, including Aramaiti; but the rest of the hymn is dedicated to the Waters. It is hardly possible to doubt that we have a term

[1] On this point see below, p. 79.

of the old Aryan nature-worship back again, and that Zarathushtra would have sternly recognized what he called *Daeva*-worship. We notice also another element which Zarathushtra significantly ignored:

> We adore the Fravashis of righteous men and women. (*Ys.* $37^3$.)

We have seen already[1] why he passed over these spirits, so conspicuous in the later religion.

The Seven Chapters proceed very clearly from a priestly source. The 'long-armed offering' (*Ys.* $38^5$) is potent as in the Veda to wrest blessings from heaven. And the shadow of the coming priestcraft is on these words.

> O Mazdah Ahura, make the warriors righteous and following Right, the husbandmen serviceable for long, earnest, firm comradeship to us, that they be devoted to us. (*Ys.* $40^3$.)

Devoted, and prompt with their acknowledgements of 'long-armed sacrifices' performed! There is no true analogue to this in the Gathas, though excellent authorities would find priestly caste in the *airyəman*, which seems rather to mean 'brotherhood', the master and his pupils.[2]

The appendix to the Seven Chapters takes us distinctly farther along this road, which by this time has come a long way from its starting-point. 'We adore Mazdah and Zarathushtra' is a new departure indeed. The 'Holy Immortals' and the Seven Chapters Gatha receive adoration, and the waters, mountains, roads, fields, lakes, winds, and the rest of the nature-powers. Haoma is back again in his old place from which the Prophet so fiercely ejected him—whether in his reformed character or not we cannot say. And there is at the end a curious verse:

> The return of the priests (*āθravano*) we adore, who have gone afar to those who seek Right in (other) lands.

Does this point to the missionary propaganda?

The Seven Chapters, short though they are, have revealed

[1] See above, p. 36.

[2] See *E. Z.*, p. 117 f.

abundantly the trend of the religion when Zarathushtra was gone. There is no sign of the Magi, or the features of later Zoroastrianism which our classical witnesses associated with them. But the main cults of the old nature-worship are back again with very little change; it was only necessary to subordinate them to the supreme deity—to call them angels instead of gods as we should put it—and everything might go on as before. It is of course just what happened in the early history of Christianity; old gods become new saints often even without changing their name, and a veneer of Christian phraseology sufficed to make the whole thing quite sound. The parallel holds in other directions. We have seen that in the Seven Chapters—or rather in their later appendix—the sacrifice of Zarathushtra's teaching was atoned for by an apotheosis of the teacher. We are safe in assuming that other religious leaders as well as Zarathushtra, were they to revisit communities that honour their respective names in this way, would alike regard the atonement as an aggravation of the offence. Another common element is the revival of the old habit of using spells. In the appendix and the introductory stanza of the Haptanghaiti the new Gatha itself is already an object of adoration. As the Gathic dialect became archaic and finally unintelligible, the Gathas took on a character their authors little dreamed of. On the principle *omne ignotum pro magnifico*, the words in a dead language acquired a special sanctity, and the *manthra*, by which Zarathushtra meant a word of prophetic inspiration, degenerated into an incantation: in India probably the *manthra* had never been anything else. This too is a familiar phenomenon in other religions.

All these tendencies appear in a very much heightened form in the parts of the Later Avesta which are written in verse. This very fact authenticates them, broadly speaking, as of decidedly higher antiquity than the prose parts, which have a great deal of suspicious grammar, suggesting that when they were composed the language itself was obsolete, and not merely the art of metric. For the description of the contents of the

verse Avesta it will suffice to refer to the little book (*Early Religious Poetry of Persia*) which is devoted to this literature. While there are signs of the work of the Magi—whereof more before long—in the Yashts and the other verse sections, their character generally is much more like the Seven Chapters. Late and perfunctory prose Yashts being left to the next section, we find that the divinities in whose honour these hymns are sung are mostly the old Iranian spirits whom Zarathushtra dethroned. Haoma, Mithra, Tishtrya (the star Sirius), the Fravashis, and the new Water-Spirit Anahita, whom from an instructive notice in Herodotus we find to be largely an importation from the Semites, are the main objects of worship. And we soon realize that the subordination of these *ex hypothesi* angels to Ahura Mazdah has been very imperfectly done. The general framework of a normal Yasht is a succession of persons who came to the Yazata, asked a boon, and were favoured, or sometimes—being creatures of Ahriman—refused. But the stanza now to be quoted from the Yasht dedicated to Anahita is paralleled in other cases, and Parsi theology has a hard task if it would reconcile such language with monotheism. The canto is printed so as to reproduce the mixture of verse with later interpolations in prose.[1]

Her worship'ed
Ahura Mazdah, Creator,
in the Aryan *Vaejah* on the goodly Daitya river,
Came with milk and Hom, with barsom
Came with skill of tongue, with Manthra,
with word and act and libations and right-spoken utterances. Then he prayed of her
Upon me bestow this blessing,
thou good, beneficent Ardvi Sura Anahita,
That the son of Pourushaspa,
Him the righteous Zarathushtra,
I may lead to thinking, speaking,
Acting after my religion.

Ardvi Sura Anahita bestowed on him this blessing, even on him as

[1] From *E. R. P. P.*, p. 127.

he at once brought libations, devoutly worship'ed and prayed, bestowing the blessing. (*Yt.* $5^{17-19}$.)

Mazdah apparently worships Tishtrya (*Yt.* $8^{3}$) and Ashi (*Yt.* $17^{61}$); and in $10^{1}$ he declares he has created Mithra as worthy of worship as himself. But this last stanza is given by Geldner as prose. It is clear that such concepts belong not to monotheism but to what is called henotheism, in which one divinity fills the whole stage for his time, but another may stand equally alone there when his turn comes.[1] Now it may be recalled that throughout the Achaemenian age, and that of the Arsacid dynasty which followed it, there was no special impulse which would promote the maintenance of monotheism. Even Darius, the one monarch who impresses us as a really religious man, only called Ahura Mazdah 'greatest of gods', and associates the 'royal gods' with him. Overwhelmingly paramount though Ahura Mazdah was for him, it is clear that monotheistic theory had very little to do with his worship. His successors do not count in the same way. But such an outrage as the annual burial of noble youths and maidens 'to appease the god beneath the earth', recorded by Herodotus of the wife of Xerxes,[2] is evidence that the Court religion was not strongly protected from polytheism.

Our present purpose does not require us to go into detail as to the historical matters which are examined at some length in the Hibbert Lectures. We may round off our historical survey with a summary of the foreign influence which came in to complete the divergence from Zarathushtra. All our classical authorities agree in their strong impression of a very marked difference between the Persians and the Magi, who before our earliest witness had made themselves indispensable as priests. The Magi were one of six tribes among which the population of Media was divided. They made a temporarily successful bid for political power when Gaumāta the Magus seized the throne in the character of Bardiya (Smerdis), the murdered

[1] See other instances in Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Theology*, p. 79 f.
[2] See *E. Z.*, p. 57.

brother of Cambyses. The Aryan aristocracy regained its power under the leadership of the great Darius, and an annual festival, the *Magophonia*, celebrated the downfall of the priests who had tried to be kings. After a generation or two we find the Magi firmly established as a sacred caste. Their general resemblance to the Brahmans is very suggestive in the light of Dr D. B. Spooner's investigations. They kept their distinctive practices for centuries, and Greek witnesses expressly show that the Persians did not share them. Conspicuous among these were the exposing of the dead to vultures, and the practice of next-of-kin marriage. For these and other peculiarities 'Aryan' parallels have been adduced. No serious difference is made to the general theory, provided that 'Aryan' is understood as 'Aryan-speaking'. In this sense the Scythians and other aboriginals were Aryan. What concerns us more is that the Magi did not convert the Persians to their special practices, except to a very limited degree. We cannot prove that the Persians made use of the vultures before the Sassanian age. In spite of their priests' vehement declamations about the religious merit of marriage with sister, daughter, or mother—enforced even by making Aramaiti the daughter and wife of Ahura Mazdah—the Persians rejected the Magian doctrine with abhorrence. Attempts to find the doctrine in the Avesta, though supported even by such an authority as Professor Bartholomae, are complete failures.[1] The modern Parsis try very hard to prove that even their Rabbinic literature has been misunderstood, and the classical writers were transmitters of a libel. The authority of Dr E. W. West and others must determine the first point. As to the second, the testimony is too varied and too clear to be questioned. But the admission does not compromise the Parsi religion, which emphatically rejected this alien element from the first. Other characteristics of this sacerdotal caste were also rejected. Plutarch tells us that the Magi sacrificed a wolf to the god of evil in a sunless place. This is akin to the spirit of Mithraism, but the pro-

[1] For proofs see *E. Z.*, pp. 206 ff.

pitiation of evil powers never gained any footing in Parsism. The interpretation of dreams and the practice of astrology were famous accomplishments of the Magi: neither has any place in the Avesta. Nor has magic, which gained its very name from them. We may reasonably conjecture that only the Magi resident in Persia identified themselves with Zoroastrianism, and that a great many Magi living in other countries kept up their own special beliefs and usages, which might easily be credited to Zoroastrian Magi by misunderstanding.

Those, however, who threw in their lot with the Mazdayasna profoundly modified its whole spirit. The most far-reaching change brought in was that which inclined the religion to something fairly called Dualism. The Vendidad, and Parsi religion as dependent on it, must be called essentially dualist, with one crucial reservation. For the Magi the world is one vast game of chess. There is a black king whose functions and moves are exactly those of the white; and every other piece has a corresponding piece on the other side of the board. But the creed never wavered as to White's ultimately winning: indeed Magian calculation could tell in how many moves it would be checkmate. It works out at A.D. 2398: those who are in a hurry for greater precision will find the exact hour supplied in Dr West's account of the world chronology.[1] The very thoroughness with which the Magians carried out their system of exact balancing saved them from any really serious danger of dualism. If Ormazd is omnipotent and omniscient, clearly Ahriman must be weak and ignorant; and with such a disadvantage he has no chance in the struggle.

The Magi were responsible, it would seem, for the great development of Ritual. Just as the Brahmans extended the simple Aryan ritual to the enormous complexity it attains in India, so did the Magi in Iran. The stamp of a priestly caste is over the whole system. The Deity is made to dictate all sorts of meticulous trifles about worship, such as

[1] *S. B. E.*, vol. iv.

a priestly mind has loved in all ages and places. The end of it all has been of course to make the priest the one indispensable intermediary between God and His worshippers. It is interesting to notice that they never put their own name into the Avesta.[1] It would explain this if the name was historically a nickname given by outsiders.[2] Whether this be so or not, in the Avesta the priests have the old Aryan names only.

We postpone to Chapter 4 the delineation of Parsi religion as it comes out of the Later Avesta as a whole. Before we attempt this, we must describe the great reform by which the Avesta was reconstituted and the religion set on a new basis, to prosper as it had never done through a period of four centuries.

The first attempt to reform Zoroastrianism after a long period of decay was made by the Parthian King Valkhash (Vologeses) in the third quarter of the first century of our era. There seems to have been a partial recovery of the sadly scattered texts of the Avesta, preparing the way for a more drastic reformation two centuries later. Ardashir, founder of the Sassanian dynasty in Persia, established Zoroastrianism as the religion of the state, and set himself to get the sacred texts put in order. The golden age of orthodoxy set in with a later Sassanian, Shāhpūhr III (A. D. 309–79). A great Parsi saint, Ādarbād Mahraspand, whose name is literally the first of real distinction known to us since the age of the Founder, set himself to do battle with the heresies which had been distracting the faithful. The chief of these was Manicheism, which troubled the Christian world more seriously. Adarbad seems to have achieved a great victory, in the eyes of the king, which we may safely put down to his fervour and knowledge. Legend, after its manner, belittled the achievement by embellishing it: he appealed to God's judgement, had molten brass poured on his

[1] Except in *Yt.* 65[7], an exception proving the rule.
[2] As suggested in *E. Z.*, p. 428 f.

breast and came out unscathed. The story probably starts from a literalistic perversion of his appeal to God's future judgement of the Molten Metal, which is to be poured out at the Regeneration.[1] Darmesteter puts the sequel succinctly.[2]

> The king announced that the true religion having manifested itself in a visible way any false religion would be tolerated no more. That great religious event must have taken place about the year 330, for the persecution of the Christians began in that year. It was about the time when the Fathers at Nicaea organized Christianity into an orthodox state religion.

So two great religions started a new course of seeming triumph together, and before many generations passed were alike on the high road to that decadence which always follows when Force is called in to help religion. In both cases Force was destined to change sides, and true prosperity to return with the loss of that false and dangerous ally.

It should be stated, *à propos* of the quotation of the great French Orientalist, that we have put forward some undeniable and some very probable facts on the authority of a conspicuously accessible and proportionately misleading work, Darmesteter's, written during the last year of his life. The student who turns for information to the *Sacred Books of the East* will be careful to remember that no other scholar ever accepted the doctrine about the lateness of the Gathas there set forth, as an inference partly from the admitted facts about the Avesta in the Sassanian Reform.

We may complete this chapter by recording in summary form the latest events in the ancient history of Parsi religion. The Sassanian era closed in blood and fire with the coming of Islam. Fanatical hordes of savage Arabs, faithful disciples of a prophet of a very different order from Zarathushtra, swept over Persia and brought the usual categorical alternative. The larger part of the Avesta was finally lost, and

[1] See above, p. 32.
[2] *S. B. E.*, iv², p. xlvii.

the bulk of the Parsis accepted perforce the sorry substitute of the Koran. But a faithful remnant fled over the seas to Gujarat, where they were kindly harboured. There began the new chapter, strangely different from the old, which we shall take up later. It rarely happens that Ancient and Modern History divide with so palpable and simple a barrier.

# CHAPTER 4

## ZARATHUSHTRA IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD

> Such times have not been since the light that led
> The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
>
> TENNYSON.

IT must be admitted at the outset, lest this chapter should raise expectations not destined to be realized, that its results will be almost entirely negative. We shall mostly be engaged in asking why fragrance was destined to be wasted on desert air. Our previous inquiries have satisfied us that the Avesta is really fragrant—in parts, and that the parts about which we cannot say this are at any rate neutral: the moralist has never occasion to hold his nose as he goes through. Which cannot be said of all 'sacred' literature!

There are two leading reasons why it is not enough to reduce this chapter to 'The Avesta has always been practically unknown in the outside world'. In the first place, scholars of repute—though never scholars whose reputation was made in the field of Avestan learning—have often asserted the contrary. And secondly, the fact that the Avesta has circulated mostly in a desert will prove to be very suggestive in our estimate of the Parsi religion in later days.

Most of the attempts made to trace the influence of the Avesta outside Iran have been in connexion with the history of Judaism. There are some obvious points of contact between the two religions. Take the doctrine of Evil. There is no question that the post-exilic Judaism had a doctrine rather markedly different from the pre-exilic. In the latest books of the Old Testament there emerges a being called 'the Adversary' (*Sātān*), who ultimately came to occupy a position

remarkably like that of Angra Mainyu ('enemy spirit') in the Later or Magian Avesta. In Zarathushtra's teaching, and in that of the 'Second Isaiah', the One God is the Creator of light and darkness alike. Later generations made physical evil the work of a fiend. 'By the envy of the devil death entered into the world,' says the *Wisdom of Solomon*;[1] and similarly Angra Mainyu is conspicuously the author of death in the system of the Magi. In both systems 'The Enemy' has a host of minor demons serving under him, and in both the fight between Good and Evil is to end in the destruction of the latter. When it is added that the Jews were exiled to Babylon, where they certainly would be in contact with the Magi, the conjecture is easy that they learnt their new doctrine from them.

Easy—at first sight, and then very difficult. For in both cases we can trace the genesis of an idea and not merely note the coincidence of a name. At the outset this history seems to heighten the suggestion of borrowing. The Enemy Spirit in the Gathas is the *twin* of the 'Holier' (or 'Kindlier'), and we remember, of course, that at his earliest appearance in Hebrew literature 'the Satan' figures among 'the sons of God'.[2] But there any resemblance ends. Putting aside the question whether 'the Enemy', once named in the Gathas, is identical with Falsehood, the really prominent fiend there, we note that the one thing predicated of him is that in 'neither thoughts nor teachings nor wills nor beliefs nor words nor deeds nor selves nor souls' do he and the Holier Spirit agree. He is accordingly before all things the antithesis of Good all round. What is 'the Satan'? His origin is transparently clear, and is unmistakable in two at least of the three places where he is named in the Old Testament. He is an angel strictly subordinate to Yahweh, whose function it is to test men's pretensions to righteousness. He is no more necessarily malignant than the Examiner who plays the same essential part in the University system, testing claims to an intellectual

[1] Wis. $2^{24}$. [2] Job $1^{6}$, $2^{1}$.

hall-mark. But an Examiner whose ruling passion is to plough his candidates is bound to grow suspicious and ill-willed! It was therefore good psychology which led Jewish thought on towards a conception of the Devil as simply a fiend. A profound instinct which pictured Omniscient Goodness as ever searching for a soul of goodness in things evil, refusing to quench the smouldering wick or break off the cracked reed, developed also the appalling figure of a Fiend incomparably blacker than Ahriman out of the angel who could see the soul of evil in the goodness of a Job.

The analysis of the history of this idea leads us then to realize that while there are many similarities between the developed pictures of Ahriman and Satan, they started from widely distant points, and converged only by accident. And, after all, this is profoundly natural. Once let the problem of Evil be solved, or helped to its solution, by a belief that there is a stream of tendency, not ourselves, making for unrighteousness, and a large measure of agreement is inevitable. The names of the two fiends coincide—when we put them into English! But theology as well as comparative philology has need to recognize that a word in one language never is the complete equivalent of a word in another. 'The Satan' is still in the New Testament ἀντίδικος, the 'adversary at law', the 'Accuser of the brethren', in accordance with his history. Angra Mainyu, 'the Enemy Spirit,' is pictured rather from the battle-field. But even if the words were complete equivalents, it would be laughable to deduce a common origin for so obvious an idea as this, that a spirit that tries to tempt us to our ruin is an Enemy! And so in all the rest of the picture, while coincidences abound, we always find divergence in the first stage. We only come back to the palpable fact that thought is bound to hit on similar solutions of similar problems, just because the human mind is similarly constituted, and has similar data to work upon. There are far too many investigators—especially in Germany—who, when they discover in distant countries the first dawn of the belief that two

units meeting another two find themselves four, set to work upon constructing a highway along which this novelty may have passed from one country to the other. The alternative theory, that 'great wits jump', seems at least equally plausible.

There is another subject in the same department on which we may come to a similar conclusion after withstanding a similar temptation. The Parsi and the Jewish doctrines of the entry of evil into the world have some very curious identities. In both we find the first sinner tempted by an evil spirit to give forbidden food to another, and in both cases forbidden food is supposed to confer immortality.[1] This will add a good illustration of a useful principle, which is that when we have two related stories before us, it is easy to combine them in phraseology suiting both, and to omit characteristics which would dilute the similarity. The finding of the highest common factor is a process belonging to elementary mathematics, and its literary analogue is equally elementary, though practised by not a few scholars who seem to think that they are doing something rather profound. Now in this story we may dispel the sense of really significant parallelism by merely telling it in its independent forms. In the Avesta (combining early and later notices) King Yima—who in Aryan antiquity had been the first man, but was so no longer—gives to his subjects portions of beef, which seem to represent the flesh of the Primaeval Bull, the eating of which at the Regeneration is to bestow immortality. His doing this was apparently an act of presumption inspired by the Daevas, to whose lies he yielded. In Genesis it is the first woman who gives to her husband the fruit of the forbidden tree; and it is not this tree which confers immortality, but another, from touching which Adam and Eve are prevented by being driven out of Paradise. Now of course the conception of a food of immortality is found

[1] This way of interpreting the Gathic verse is much closer to the Hebrew narrative than the usual explanation: for its defence see *E. Z.*, pp. 148 f. and 307.

among many unrelated peoples; and the mere fact that fruit is a substance not at all easily confounded with the fat of the *Urkuh* is enough to dispose of all probability that either religion borrowed from the other.

Both religions have a doctrine of heavenly beings that 'kept not their first estate'. The Daevas, we are told, 'chose not aright' between the Twain Spirits, 'for infatuation came upon them as they took counsel together, so that they chose the Worst Thought' (*Ys.* $30^6$). Combining this with the fact that the Daevas were once *devāḥ*, 'heavenly beings,' we can see that the real meaning of it depends on the perverse choice made by the *daevayasna*, the worshippers of the old Nature divinities of the Aryans, who refused to accept Zarathushtra's reform, and 'rushed together to violence, that they might enfeeble the world of man'. They raided the farms of the Prophet's peaceful agriculturists and tried to extinguish the new faith in blood. We have in Israel, in the degeneration of the Baalim, the same passage of a word from God to devil, but there seems no other connexion. The Fall of the Angels is quite a conspicuous doctrine in Israel, where it seems to have been attributed to ambition (as recalled in Shakespeare's familiar words), or to lust (based on Gen. 6); in either case the doctrine starts on quite different lines from those of the Gatha.

Another very important subject in which the Jews have been supposed to be borrowers is the doctrine of the Future Life. Here there is no question that Zarathushtra taught an ethical system of rewards and punishments in the Hereafter ages before the Jews had emerged from their ancestral belief in a colourless Sheol of barely conscious existence, in which 'there is no remembrance of God'. We have seen moreover that the Resurrection as preached in the last generations B.C. was a doctrine in all essential features parallel with that which Zarathushtra taught a millennium earlier; in most respects it might have been taken from him, if we could only show how. The dates fit well, for it was a few generations after the return from Babylon that the Jews began to realize the Great Hope for

the first time. And yet it does not seem possible to believe that the Jews got an impulse from their neighbours during the Captivity. We might possibly go so far as to suppose that Jewish thinkers were stimulated to search their own scriptures afresh, when they found that the compatriots of Cyrus held a doctrine of a Future Life which did not repel their instincts of morality. But nothing can be clearer than that Jewish thought came to the great venture by a very different road. The Magi believed in immortality because death was so palpably the creation of Ahriman, and immortality therefore of Ormazd. Zarathushtra believed it because he knew that God was just, and therefore the righteous must be recompensed in another world for the unmerited sufferings of this. Jewish saints came to believe it because they had learnt the preciousness of communion with God, and realized that He could not possibly abandon to extinction the child of His love.

It seems therefore that in all things that really matter we have no adequate grounds for believing Jewish ideas indebted to any outside source which can be connected with the Avesta. This conclusion is independent of another line of inquiry which must be undertaken before we could prove that even the most convincing parallels were due to real contact. We need to show that the ideas of the Avesta could have access to the Jews at the time under review. And that is extremely difficult to prove for the one part of the Avesta which has permanent religious value. For one of the many bewildering problems attaching to the great name of Zarathushtra is the fact that his doctrine ran underground through so many centuries. This fact was at the basis of James Darmesteter's impossible theory. A man so great and so uniquely acquainted with the facts was not likely to propound a revolutionary hypothesis without some sort of basis. We may confess that, without ever feeling the slightest temptation towards Darmesteter's reading of the evidence, we have been more and more impressed with the strangeness of the phenomena on which the great Orientalist based his view. The attempt to find footprints of Zarathushtra

on the sands of a dozen centuries nearly always ends in disappointment. Can we suggest a reason, and can we reconstruct the picture of Zarathushtra as it appeared to his avowed followers during the ages which open with the Gatha of Seven Chapters and end with the Sassanian Reform? In attempting to answer these questions, we shall assume the discussions which fill a large part of *Early Zoroastrianism*; this consideration is recalled lest we should be supposed to be advancing mere guesswork without proofs.

Why, then, have we so little sign of the genuine Zarathushtra, as depicted in the Gathas, during all those ages? The answer is really very simple. In the thoroughly characteristic features of his system, Zarathushtra was far above the heads of his contemporaries. We have to wait some centuries before the Iranian aloe flowered again. If, as Dr Spooner makes extremely probable, Gautama the Buddha was 'the Iranian Monk' (*Çākya Muni*), we may recognize after perhaps half a millennium a religious thinker in Iran (rather broadly defined), who may be regarded as Zarathushtra's intellectual and spiritual peer. In the other branch of the easternmost Aryan family, we must look to the circle that produced the Upanishads before we find anything comparable. It is not at all surprising therefore that not long after the Prophet's disappearance from the scene where his powerful personality had impressed his teaching on people who came under the spell, there was a virtual return of the beliefs current among his contemporaries. The 'Seven Chapters Gatha' is sufficient evidence that this was so. It may be quite possible to accomplish a religious synthesis by which the Later Avesta will fit into the system determined by the Gathas. But it must start from presuppositions which nobody could deduce from the Yashts by unaided reason. If we agree to postpone this synthesis till the Sassanian Reform, we are free to take the Yashts at their face value, as hymns of a Nature religion very much like that of the Veda, only superficially accommodated to the stern and lofty monotheism of a Prophet already lost in the mists of

antiquity and a philosophy too profound for his own or subsequent ages.

With this key to our problem, we may proceed to ask what the last ten centuries or so before the Sassanians thought of Zarathushtra, or knew of his teaching. And first as to his personality. One of the very few legends about the Prophet which have early attestation concerns his laughing on the day he was born. It is as old as Pliny the Elder, and may probably be recognized a century before this in the famous 'Messianic Eclogue' of Virgil.[1] It is most interesting in that it preserves the impression of a teacher who took an optimist view of life. And this is of course one of the most outstanding features of the historical Prophet, who was veritably an Eastern Democritus and much more, a man who based his whole system on the unshakable conviction that Truth is great and will prevail. We should remember what foils there were to such a doctrine of Faith in the early Indo-Iranian world. Between Zarathushtra and Gautama the theory of re-birth (*punarjanma*) cast its baleful shadow over life in India and perhaps some part of Iran. Putting aside all question of its adequacy as an interpretation of the riddle of existence, it may be presumed that no one will deny the profound sadness with which it enshrouds the present and the future. Consciousness is a nightmare out of which the sleeper only desires to escape into slumber for ever untroubled with dreams. In the sharpest possible contrast to this gloom which was to afflict the meditative East for ages, our great thinker proclaimed a radiantly optimist theory of life, based on an intuition that God is one and that God is good, and that He can never be conquered by evil nor allow His obedient children to lose the bliss prepared for them. It was a most significant instinct which fastened on this as the central trait of a great Teacher who saw life from the first as a beautiful and gracious gift from God.

Apart from this individualizing trait, we may sum up the general impression of Zarathushtra as centred on his fame as

[1] See *E. R. P. P.*, p. 51 f. Cf. *E. Z.*, p. 92.

a master of occult lore. This may be largely accounted for by his association with the Magi, long recognized as adepts. But the classical notices of the Prophet suggest something more; and it is good that we should be able to base our conceptions on something more reliable than the claim of the Magian clan to have produced the great leader whose doctrines they took under their charge. It was really a dim remembrance of actual truth that had been preserved. Zarathushtra, as we read him to-day, is the founder of Apocalyptic, a literary *genre* which was destined to take a very prominent place in the late Jewish and early Christian writings. Vision of a future lying wholly in the spiritual world was so characteristic of him that we can readily understand its preservation as a note of his personality where all details of his teaching had disappeared. The Magi, who were astrologers and diviners of dreams, easily attached themselves to this, which was really very different; and the popular etymology by which the second element in Zarathushtra's name was supposed to mean 'star' heightened the association. A great sage, skilled in 'white magic' and gifted with powers of insight into futurity, was naturally supposed also to have had special relations with Deity. The legend of his goddess bride and entertainment at the table of a supreme deity, which seems to lie behind the mysterious passage at the end of the Fourth Eclogue of Virgil, answers to the stories of his colloquies with Ahura Mazdah, so prominent in the Later Avesta, and the miraculous generation of the Saoshyants. They were a very easy effort in myth-making when the Magian priests sought to expound and enforce the fact of the Prophet's intimate knowledge of the Future and of the will of God. The birth of the Saoshyants is even more obviously explicable. In the Gathas, Zarathushtra is evidently penetrated with a powerful conviction that the Renovation, to preach which was his divine call, would come within his lifetime, and he himself would with his faithful helpers have the privilege of bringing it in. They would accordingly be Saoshyants, 'men that are to deliver' the world. But when

the Prophet died, and his own immediate followers, and 'all things remained as they had been from the beginning of the creation', we cannot wonder that keen faith persisted in connecting with him the still future blessing, to be achieved by those who would be vitally connected with the great preacher.

With all this naturally came a conviction that Zarathushtra was supreme as a priest, a pioneer performer of the ceremonies which the Magi had made central in the religion. In the *Hom Yasht* (*Ys.* 9–11), the least damaged piece of verse in the Later Avesta, and therefore presumably among its oldest poems, Zarathushtra's father is given the fourth place among those who prepared the sacred drink and won for reward the happiness of distinguished sons. It is rather suggestive that the old folklore heroes Yima, Thraetaona, and Keresaspa are all described in practically perfect verse; and the material is of the popular kind which could be detached from the Brewing of Haoma without any one's missing it. As soon as Zarathushtra's corresponding exploit comes to be set forth, the verse at once begins to halt. The indication might mean little in itself, and with some ingenuity in emendation and the striking out of glosses we might perhaps enable the lame to walk. But even so it is curious that so large a proportion of verses need one or other of the two expedients in the practice of Procrustes. And suspicion becomes confirmed when we note that from Yima the lord of an Earthly Paradise, Thraetaona, a typical St George with the Dragon, and Keresaspa, concerned in the very common folk-story of mariners mistaking a sea-monster's back for an island, we have suddenly stepped into a new world—the all too familiar world of the priest and the master of spells. The grandeur of the Prophet of Righteousness is out of sight. The beauty of the Honover is lost in Zarathushtra's great discovery that the formula is to be chanted four times, with proper attention to the pauses, and the second part with emphasis in recital. Such is the easy downward path along which religions glide to self-satisfied nullity! Pagan folklore kept its place all the time that the

language was truly living and capable of free use in the old verse forms. Sacerdotalism comes in with its contribution when verse was becoming a lost art and the Avestan language was no longer the tongue of the people.

Was there anything of Zarathushtra's genuine teaching that lived on during those dark ages of the Parsi faith? *A priori*, we should expect some of the easier doctrines to survive, just because of the impact made by the Prophet's personality. Men might not fully understand him; and, when his presence was withdrawn, they might well slip back easily into the familiar beliefs he had superseded, not from want of reverence to him, but simply because his thought was too high for them. But since it is clear that the deepest veneration for his memory lived on—so that his figure, wreathed in the clouds of forgotten antiquity, became the very type of a mysterious Eastern Sage who had access to divine realities unknown to lesser men—we reasonably expect to find his favourite words and phrases current long after his day, even if their original and deeper meaning was largely forgotten. And this is exactly what we do find. His great triad of Word, Thought, and Deed attains a fixed position, and even passes on into Buddhism and Jainism. Indeed in this case it was not a mere catchword that survived; much of the spirit of this profound innovation, by which man stands before God in the light of his own inmost thoughts and not merely as pictured by deeds men can see and words they can hear, remained as a permanent heritage of Parsi teaching, even if its implications were not very fully realized.

Then something remained of the Doctrine of the Amesha-spands. In this case what remained was of comparatively little value. The six supreme attributes of God had been isolated and specially named as early as the Gatha of Seven Chapters. Zarathushtra was so constantly talking of them that it would have been a miracle if they had been forgotten by any one who held his memory sacred. But it is more than doubtful whether their names meant anything. They were only admitted to the circle of the *yazata*, perhaps placed

above them as a sort of archangelic college. If any particular ideas were associated with their names, they would be those of the material realms their inherited title to which Zarathushtra, perhaps rather grudgingly, allowed them to retain. Vohumano, if Strabo's Cappadocian Omanus is to claim identification, was worshipped as a Golden Calf, or something of the kind; and in the same country Ameretat seems to have been embodied in an image that shared processions with Omanus. We meet with the names of Ameshaspands in the Cappadocian Calendar and on the Indo-Scythian coins. Indeed the nomenclature of Persian court circles in Achaemenian days may quite possibly be linked with these characteristic conceptions of Zarathushtra by something more than coincidence: the prominence of *Arta* as an element in royal and aristocratic names, may well be connected with the thought as well as the name of Asha. But none of this amounts to any proof that the Ameshaspands, as Zarathushtra conceived them, survived him except in name. It is only our present-day scientific study of the Gathas that has restored these dim abstractions to the lofty place they held in the Prophet's theology.

One small but not unimportant point is noted in connexion with the account of the Magi in Diogenes, who says that the Magi

> condemn the use of images, and especially the error of those who attribute to the divinities difference of sex.

It is shown in the note upon that passage that the remark is untrue of all Zarathushtra's successors, from the 'Seven Chapters Gatha' down. But it is altogether true of the Prophet, for Asha, Vohu Manah, and Khshathra have names that are grammatically neuter, so that the feminine gender of the names Aramaiti, Haurvatat, and Ameretat is obviously not significant. Somehow, it would seem, this genuine feature of the Prophet's own teaching must have managed to survive, though not traceable in other sources.

[1] See *E. Z.*, p. 413, n. 3.

In one other field of thought it seems that Zarathushtra left real influence behind him, and stamped his impress on those who were to represent him to the world. This was the doctrine of the Hereafter. The essence of his doctrine lies, we have seen, in the great thought that a man's inmost self determines his future destiny, and that the Self that is to mould that future is moulded in turn by deeds and words and thoughts. Rewards and punishments are accordingly ethical through and through, and they depend on a principle of continuity between this world and the next. These central ideas are enshrined in the gem of the Later Avesta, the fragment known as the *Hadhokht Nask*, or as Yasht 22. The piece has the hall-mark of the Magi on it: the use of sacred formulae, and the exact balancing of every trait in the good man's experience by one equal and opposite for the bad man, can come from no other source. But the pivot of the whole is the coming of the Self (*Daenā*) to meet the departing soul and bring it on its way, and the fact that Deeds, Words, and Thoughts are the three steps by which the soul ascends to high heaven or descends to lowest hell. One of the few things the Greeks and Romans knew about the Magi was that they taught that men would be immortal. With this was naturally coupled in men's ideas about Zoroaster that he was a sage deeply versed in the lore of the Unseen—a conception truly derived from the Prophet's apocalyptic teaching, in which he was a pioneer.

Other features of the later picture of Zarathushtra need not detain us. That he was a Magus—that he was king of Bactria—that he lived in the wilderness on cheese—that he performed a variety of not very well invented miracles—all this and like things were very naturally devised by the fancy of later times. That he wrote the Avesta was an assumption current among the Greeks, one of whom saw two million verses of his writing. Then of course he was held responsible for the most obvious features of Magian religion—for Ormazd and Ahriman, for the duty of killing Ahrimanian animals,

for the giving of corpses to the vultures, and for the sacredness of marriage with a next of kin.

Out of this miscellaneous Zoroaster, as known to the Greeks and Romans, at an earlier date to the Jews in exile, we have to pick out probable or possible elements which may have found their way into other religions. We have mostly dealt with the Jews already. That they may have slightly coloured their angelology and demonology from the system they found around them in Media and Babylon is not impossible. That they learnt from some such sources the literary form known as Apocalyptic is not unlikely. But we dare not yield to temptation and take any more.

A new and startling development of possibilities of external influence has been lately opened up by Dr Spooner, in connexion with those fruitful discoveries of his spade at Pāṭaliputra. Having seen reason to suspect Persian and Magian influence in the time of Candragupta and his famous grandson Açoka, he has since gone further, and found much striking evidence that the beginnings of Buddhism owe a great deal to the Magi. Çākya Muni, Gautama's title, is regarded as meaning 'Iranian Silentiary': we connect at once the tradition that Zoroaster was a silentiary monk for years. It is very unlike the Prophet of the Gathas, but sufficiently suits the traditional sage who may have been known to Gautama. Dr Spooner has shown that the practice of sister-marriage appears in Gautama's circle, and other characteristics of Magians in his time. His virtual surrender of Theism may have come from a deep dissatisfaction alike with Magian Dualism and Hindu polytheism, neither of which gave him a doctrine of God that would satisfy the obstinate questions of his mind, or still the cravings of his heart. And Dr Spooner has even suggested that the doctrine of re-incarnation, destined to mould so profoundly the thought of India for ages, owed its first impulse to the Magi, and their conception of the Fravashi. We should have to suppose that the Magi, so characteristically adaptable to the people among

whom they settled as priests, came among North Indian tribes who had developed out of purely animistic presuppositions the common notion that souls migrated into new bodies, of animals, plants, or other men. The Magi would combine this with their own inherited Fravashi, regarded not as an ancestor-spirit—which was the Aryan side of the concept—but as a 'double' in the spiritual world. We must probably assume that the synthesis apparent in the Farvardin Yasht had not arisen in the particular tribe of Magi to whom this new work fell. Obviously nothing could be made of a guardian angel which united with the soul at death, and made a permanent new spiritual being which took its abode in heaven or hell according to its past merits or demerits. But a Fravashi which was merely a spiritual double, and existed in the spiritual world before it took a special relation to one human personality, might have had such relations with other personalities in an endless succession. Some process of this kind may have entered into the perplexing history of the palpably non-Aryan doctrine of *punarjanma*. The Magi were, we have already seen, gifted with a genius for syncretism. The mixtures they made were widely different, and they themselves accordingly take a very different guise as they meet us in various parts of the immense area they covered. It is the principal cause of the perplexity which makes their history so fascinating a problem.

And there we must leave it. The survey we have attempted shows us that in the days before the new golden age of Parsi religion the heritage was in the hands of men whose character and aim seem curiously familiar. Their faithfulness is beyond question. The way they preserved the Gathas, and a tradition of their meaning, is simply wonderful. To criticize them seems ungracious, when it is to them we owe the very materials for our criticism. But nothing can be clearer than that they wholly failed to catch the spirit of Zarathushtra in some of the most central elements of his great message. They could not see how seriously the

passionate monotheism of Zarathushtra was compromised by allowing practically divine reverence to be paid to the old gods whom the Prophet put away so sternly. Like all priests —except those who are Prophets as well—they were conservatives in religion. Cults which had gone on for ages must go on still. So they paid lip-worship to Zarathushtra's principles, probably thinking that they adequately settled their account with him by paying superhuman honour to his memory. His sermons in verse they turned into spells, the mere recitation of which was to accomplish magic. Alas! what would the Prophet have said, had he come back from *Garônmâna* to see how his trustees in the Achaemenian age were executing their great responsibility? Would he not have called them back from overmuch ritual, and a veneration of his own name which encroached on the worship of the One God, to learn the spirit of his teaching and expound it with fervent missionary zeal to all the world around? That lesson was not to be learnt for many a long day. The revival of Parsi faith, the collection of remnants from the old scriptures, the systematizing of theology, came in an age which realized that faith is not given to men as a jealously monopolized possession, but as a seed to be cast abroad and multiplied. That the Sassanian Parsis, with all their limitations, had the enthusiasm of propagandists, explains for us the survival of the religion when darkness and bloodshed swept over Persia, and men who loved their faith came to India as pilgrim fathers over the sea.

# CHAPTER 5

## THE RELIGION OF THE LATER AVESTA

The Persians adopt foreign customs most readily of all men.—HERODOTUS.

WE have tried to set forth, at length proportionate to its religious worth, the spiritual system of one of the greatest of prophets; and we have followed it with a tentative account of the mixed system which professed to continue it. After turning aside to ask how much the world in later days knew of the thoughts of this ancient pioneer, we come to delineate the religion of the Avesta as it stands. For this is theoretically the religion of the Parsis to-day, with which in this book we are primarily concerned.

We have called it the religion of the *Later* Avesta. Most Parsis would strongly object to the limitation. They maintain that the Gathas are central with them, and that the Later Avesta is understood by the principles derived from those earliest scriptures. But no impartial outsider can help seeing that it is impossible to correlate the early and the later, giving equal weight to both. The worshipper must choose between two ideals. And, as we shall soon have occasion to note, the modern orthodox Parsi may render lip-service to the Gathas: the very fact that he does not understand them makes it easier for him to use them as spells. But the whole of his outward religious life comes out of the Later Avesta. A Parsi who modelled his religion on the Gathas, and rejected everything that could not be at least inferentially justified from them, would be unrecognizable as a Parsi.

Let us attempt then to expound the theology of the Later Avesta, making no attempt to emphasize its differences from

the Gathas: how the modern orthodox Parsi deals with such differences we shall see in a later chapter. For the details it will suffice to refer to the excellent account contained in Dhalla's *Zoroastrian Theology*, or Williams Jackson's treatise on Avestan Religion in the *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*. Our aim will be simply to discover the religious spirit that moves in this sacred book of the Parsis, and to see whether it is congruous with that which we have recognized in the Hymns.

First, then, as to the doctrine of God. There is no mistaking the transcendence of Ahura Mazdah over all other objects of worship. The Later Avesta has one serious qualification, as we shall see; but in its theory it sets the supreme Deity on as unquestioned a throne of dominion as the Gathas themselves. The conception has contracted hardly any trace of anthropomorphism, and there never was any approach to idolatry. The extent to which Fire is really worshipped in Parsi religious practice will come up later. In the theory of the Avesta, at any rate, Fire is a sacramental symbol only. No image of Deity has ever received worship. On this the Avesta and the Greek writers bear concurrent testimony.[1] Unworthy attributes of Mazdah are conspicuously absent. Parsi religion never admitted the degrading associations which in India brought idolatry and coarse superstition into both Hinduism and Buddhism.

It is by addition that the Later Avesta has modified its doctrine of God. Attempts are often made to discount Zarathushtra's absolute silence about Mithra—to take the most crucial case. It is said that the Gathas are of small compass, and we have no reason to draw inferences from their silence. So even Dr Dhalla:[2]

> It seems to us that we tread a very delicate path when we set aside as non-Zoroastrian all that does not appear in the Gathas. Are we

[1] That the foreign deity Anahita is depicted in her Yasht from a statue seems highly probable. See *E. Z.*, pp. 239 f.

[2] *Zoroastrian Theology*, pp. 77 f.

> sure we are standing on firm ground when we dogmatically assert that the prophet of Iran discarded the pantheon and purposely kept it out of his religion of reform?

This is countered by a plea from the other side:

> We are not unmindful of the argument that the Gathas, being short devotional hymns for the use of the faithful, may not be expected to contain the entire Avesta pantheon, or an elaborate ritual. The argument may explain something, but not all. It fails to account for the entire elimination of the very names of the most prominent angels Mithra, Verethraghna, and their associates. Vital problems as these remain unsolved.

So Dr Dhalla comes to *non liquet*. It seems to us that he has allowed too much for the scruples of the modern Parsis, who in this matter can hardly be impartial. Mithra and Haoma and the Fravashis were far too prominent in the religion of the Prophet's day to be accidentally overlooked in his Hymns. The priests who preserved them were devoted to these cults, and would never have failed to preserve anything so congenial as a recognition of these ever-popular divinities. The cumulative effect of Zarathushtra's omissions is overwhelming for all who look at it impartially. And as we shall see, there is really not such a great necessity laid upon modern orthodoxy, after all.

The natural inference from Zarathushtra's coincident ignoring of all these favourite divinities is corroborated by the silence of Darius. Nor is it merely negative evidence. We have Artaxerxes Mnemon, a century later, grouping 'Ahuramazda, Anahita, and Mithra'; and his own words answer to Greek evidence that he made considerable innovations in religion. He was in fact the first king whose religion is fairly represented by the Yashts. Now this religion may be reasonably enough interpreted by the modern Parsi in the light of earlier and later elements in his canon, without touching the results obtained by studying the Yashts by themselves. There can be really little doubt that the gods who eclipsed the others in the later Achaemenian age were those to whom the great verse

Yashts were dedicated—Mithra, Anahita, Tishtrya, Haoma, and the Fravashis. Not only the Amesha Spenta, but even Mazdah himself, occupy a very secondary place in the Yashts by comparison with these. For those, however, who take the Avesta as a whole, and do not ask questions about its history, these *Yazata* become angels whose worship is admittedly over-emphasized, but falls into its right place under corrections supplied elsewhere. It must be allowed that monotheism is submitted to a severe strain when Ahura Mazdah himself offers worship to angels like these—the word used is the same as that which describes the worship offered by men.

The doctrine of God is also impoverished by the loss of the genuine doctrine of the great attributes of God. They had been formerly made into a closed circle, with a class name; but they had changed their nature. They were now simply archangels, and were by no means as prominent as the Yazatas of whom we have just been speaking. Some of the functions of the Amesha Spenta have been apparently transferred back to the old divinities from whom Zarathushtra took them, in his jealous care to exclude all temptations to polytheism. This especially applies to Mithra, who reappears as beyond everything the genius of truth and good faith. It is probable that there were two original strains mingled in his heredity, and that the Mithra known to Zarathushtra was mainly the Light-god, whose cult ultimately produced the powerful religion of Mithraism, for generations the only serious rival of Christianity in the Roman Empire. In the tenth Yasht Mithra is predominantly an ethical deity. He guards the sanctity of contracts even when made with an enemy. We can understand his being the chief divinity of a people who laid the greatest weight on Truth. It is urged that an abstraction like Asha had not the same power of forcing itself upon the mind and conscience of a simple-minded people as a picturesque and splendid figure like Mithra. Perhaps. But the history of Christianity in Europe as well as Asia has shown the dangers of such concessions. Old gods have been permitted

to come back again, baptized with Christian names, but otherwise little changed. In a polytheistic environment naturally the danger is greater still.

'Who is your god?' asked a missionary of his Indian coolie as they walked along. 'Antony my god,' was the reply. 'Antony?' 'Some say Mariamma god but I say Antony.' And the missionary realized that the man was a 'Christian' Was not Zarathushtra very wise?

In general, it may be admitted with relief, the old nature gods have been well purged of former taints before being allowed to enter the ranks of Zoroastrian angels. Haoma, 'the Averter of Death,' was historically (as we have seen)[1] a sacred intoxicant, and received as such Zarathushtra's stern condemnation. Haoma of the Hom Yasht[2] has no sign of alcoholism about him, and no Parsi has ever been the worse for drink after joining in his harmless libations. Anahita, 'the undefiled'—as her name means when read as Persian (probably through a popular etymology)—was an Elamite goddess, it would seem; and she trailed clouds of dishonour with her while she kept any relationship with the Babylonian Ishtar. But in the Yasht that sings her praise as a spirit of the waters, the popular substitute for the Prophet's Haurvatat, there is nothing to suggest this past. Not that the level of the Yashts is to be described as religiously high. The angels are petitioned for material boons, and their record is on the usual mythological lines. Power is well understood as a divine attribute, and righteousness is prominent in the delineation of Mithra. But it cannot be said that religious instincts are fed by anything the Yashts provide. We have a great deal about worship, and it is offered to a very strange variety of objects. The wood for the sacrificial fire, the words of the Gathas or other spells, the *barsom* or bundle of twigs held before the face at adoration of the fire, are alike 'worshipped', with many more incongruous objects. The very list itself is evidence that the idea of worship is not high. But unfortunately there is no higher word, or

[1] Above, pp. 8, 30. [2] *Yasna* $9^{11}$.

evidence of any higher thing. When God and His creatures share exactly the same adoration, we feel it is not worth much.

We notice how very prominent is the conception of prayer as the due repetition of formulae. The Gathas are now *manthra,* sacred spells of ineffable power, to be repeated without a flaw, by men who may or may not understand them. In this respect the Hom Yasht is peculiarly instructive. The angel appears to Zarathushtra, who asks him what mortals first achieved the brewing of the mystic drink, and what was their reward. The first three of these benefactors were the fathers of the heroes Yima, Thraetaona, and Keresaspa, and their rewards were the gift of these doughty sons whose exploits as severally king of a Golden Age, and as slayers of the usual mythological dragons, are told with verve and picturesqueness. The fourth was Zarathushtra's father, and the greatness of his son is depicted in this thrilling stanza :[1]

> Famous thou in Aryan country,
> First of men, O Zarathushtra,
> First to chant *Ahuna Vairya*
> Four times, with the pauses duly,
> Stressed the second half in utterance.

A reference to the rendering of this sacred formula as given above,[2] will show that to find a reason for this stress is difficult, if the meaning is to count. We should not wish to assert dogmatically that the meaning of this famous problem poem has been infallibly recovered by modern science; but it does seem safe to claim that when the Hom Yasht was composed the key to the interpretation had been lost. 'Meaning however is no great matter,' to quote Calverley's burlesque; and

[1] The version is from my contribution to the volume dedicated to Sir R. G. Bhandharkar.

[2] See p. 42. In prose we render it : Even as he (i.e. Zarathushtra) is the Lord for us to choose, so is he the Judge, according to the Right, he that brings the life-works of Good Thought unto Mazdah, and the Dominion unto Ahura, even he whom he made shepherd of the poor. (I now take *dadaṯ* as singular with Geldner, or emend *dadāṯ*.)

in truth the real meaning of the Ahuna Vairya had little enough to do with the uses to which it was put. Its twenty-one words supplied the divisions of the Sassanian Avesta. Its recitation by Zarathushtra scorched and smote the fiends. The logical mind, convinced by the strongest of reasoning that religion must of necessity be more rational than anything else, and that to consecrate the unintelligible is blasphemy against the Creator, stands aghast at the powers claimed for words of unexceptionable but quite ordinary sentiment, sound and good when understood, but regarded as powerful quite apart from their meaning. We soon find in the East that the magical virtue of spells is an axiom deep-rooted in immemorial consciousness. Zarathushtra broke away from it, and his followers have revenged themselves by making his own words into spells. We in the West have grown out of it, and the East's childlike criticism finds in this evidence of our 'materialism'.

We may bring in here the other sacred formulae, which are repeated indefinitely in Parsi worship. First and foremost is the *Ašem Vohu*, which may be thus paraphrased:

> Right is the highest good. So our own rights
> Meet heart's desire when Right attains its heights.[1]

It is a play on two of the meanings of Asha and teaches that the man who lives rightly gets his rights in the end: honesty is the best policy. Or, as Bartholomae takes it, in the second part Asha is the final reward; the objection is that this is normally the other Amesha, Good Thought. Also important is the *ā airyǝmā* formula, which may be thus rendered:

> Hither come, dear Brotherhood,
> Come to aid the people's good,
> Zarathushtra's faithful men,
> Faithful women,—aid again
> Goodness' self. What soul doth light
> On the precious meed of Right,

[1] Literally: Aša is the best good: it is by desire, it is by desire to us (or, to him) even our Aša to the best Aša.

(Rise, my Soul, to the Wise Lord)
Grant him thine own blest award.[1]

Since there is some reason to believe that the vibrations excited by our English will not have the magical effect that is known to follow the *ipsissima verba* of the original Gathic, it will be well to give the three formulae in the form which is guaranteed to work marvels:

(1) Yaϵā ahū vairyo, aθā ratuš ɾšācit hacā.
vanghəus dazdā manangho šyao θanañąm anghəus Mazdāi;
χšaθrəmcā Ahurāi ā, yim drəgubyo dadaṯ (?dadāṯ) vāstārəm.

(2) Ašəm vohū vahištəm astī:
ustā astī, uštā ahmāi,
hyaṯ ašhāi vahištəm ašəm.

(3) ā airyəmā išyo rafəδrāi jantū
nərəbyascā nāiribyascā Zarathuštrahyā
vanghəuš rafəδrāi manangho
yā daenā vairīm hanāṯ mīždəm
ašahyā yāsā ašīm yam išyąm
Ahuro mastā Mazdåå.[1]

To these we should add a fourth, which has great potency, but is not in Gathic: it has apparently been derived from a Gathic stanza (*Ys.* $51^{22}$) by adaptation to a new metre and Later Avestan dialect. It runs thus:

(4) Yenghē hatąm āaṯ yesnē paitī vangho
Mazdå Ahuro vaeθa ašāṯ hacā
yånghąmca tāscā tåscā yazamaidē (*Ys.* $8^{27}$).[2]

[1] It will be advisable to append the versions given by Darmesteter in *S. B. E.* It is not easy to fit them on to the original, but they are nearer to the meaning the Parsis attach. (*S. B. E.*, xxiii, p. 23) The will of the Lord is the law of holiness: the riches of Vohu-Mano shall be given to him who works in this world for Mazda, and wields according to the will of Ahura the power he gave him to relieve the poor. (Ib., p. 22) Holiness is the best of all good. Well is it for it, well is it for that holiness which is perfection of holiness. (iv, p. 23) May the vow-fulfilling Airyaman come here, for the men and women of Zarathushtra to rejoice, for Vohumano to rejoice; with the desirable reward that Religion deserves. I solicit for holiness that boon that is vouchsafed by Ahura.

[2] In prose as follows: That man and those women, of all that are, at whose worship Mazdah Ahura knows the Better thing theirs, in accordance with Right these men and women we reverence.

This in the same way we may paraphrase to get the general impression:

> Whoso, of all that live, through Righteousness
> Are known of God the better part to embrace
> In worship, men and women, these we bless.

If the repetition does not produce the desired effect, it must be remembered that we can only hope to restore something like the original pronunciation, as represented in the above transliteration.[1] The priests to-day do not come near this, and utter what, though hard for the scholar to recognize, no doubt strikes more terror into the breasts of the demons.

We may pause a moment to prove on irrefragable evidence that the formulae are operative in this way. In the Yasht dedicated to Ashi Vanguhi (Good Destiny) it is written of Zarathushtra:

> At his birth and at his upgrowing
> Rushed away the Fiendly Spirit
> From this earth, the wide extending,
> Round, with limit far-withdrawing.
> So screamed he, the Evildoer,
> Fiendly Spirit, many slaying:
> 'Never all the angels striving
> Overpowered me unwilling,
> Only Zarathushtra, only
> He can master me unwilling.
>
> He smites me with *Ahuna Vairya*, a weapon like a stone big as a hut; he scorches me with Asha Vahishta—one would think it were the Molten Metal. He makes leaving this earth better for me.' (*Yt.* 17[19] f.)

The second part of this is prose, which as usual indicates the relative antiquity. But there are verse passages to show the sacredness of this spell,[2] which was first pronounced by Ahura Mazdah (*Ys.* 19[15]). The second of the great formulae, the *Ašem Vohu*, is probably intended by the superlative *Aša Vahišta* following. Angra Mainyu feels in the sound of the spell an anticipation of the Molten Metal of the Judgement:

[1] See the table of pronunciations, p. xvi.
[2] See the quotation from the Hom Yasht, p. 89.

Zarathushtra comes to torment him before the time. We could hardly exaggerate the pre-eminence of the *mąθra spənta*, 'the holy (or beneficent) word,' in the religion of the Later Avesta, and it is difficult to choose the most typical illustrations. Two may be given, the first putting the spell and the ritual in characteristic relation. Zarathushtra is challenged by Angra Mainyu:

> To him screamed the Creator of Evil, the Fiendly Spirit: 'By whose word wilt thou strike, by whose word wilt thou drive out, by what weapon will those of the Good Creation (strike and drive out) my creatures of the Fiendly Spirit?'
>
> To him replied Spitama Zarathushtra: 'The Haoma presses, the chalices, the draughts of Haoma, the Words revealed by Mazdah, even the Vahishta [i.e. the Ashem Vohu], are my weapon: with this Word will I drive out, with this weapon shall he of the Good Creation (drive out thy creatures)[1] O thou evil-doing Fiendly Spirit. The Holy Spirit made it, made it in boundless time. The sovran kindly Amesha Spentas created it. (*Vd.* $19^8$ f.)

Further quotation is needless to show what incomparable power these two formulae possess. Our other example shall be one of another kind. The First Yasht, addressed to Ahura Mazdah, is made up of divine names, gathered in two lists, both prose, and linked by no clear principle.

It may be well to produce the verse in which they are imbedded, omitting prose glosses, and by force of necessity winking at halting verse where it seems probable that prose is not original.

> Then to him spake Zarathushtra:
> 'That great Name of thine reveal me,
> Mazdah Ahura the Righteous,
> So that I therewith may vanquish
> All the demons and all mortals;
> So that I therewith may vanquish
> All the sorcerers, all the witches;
> So that me no one may vanquish,
> Neither demon, neither mortal,
> Neither sorcerers nor witches.'

[1] Wolff appears to be wrong here.

'Worship me, O Zarathushtra,
In the daytime, in the nighttime,
With libations duly offered.
I will come to thee for helping,
I that am Ahura Mazdah;
He shall come to thee for helping,
He the righteous, good Obedience;
They shall come to thee for helping,
Waters, Plants, and Guardian Spirits.

If thou wilt, O Zarathushtra,
Vanquish all that hate malignant,
Hate of demons, hate of mortals,
Hate of sorcerers, hate of witches,
Of the Faith's perverse oppressors,
Two-foot heretics and liars,
Four-foot wolves, wide-fronted armies
Bearing on the bloodstained banner,
Then these Names repeat bemuttering,
All the day and all the nighttime.' (*Yt.* 1[5–6, 9–11].)

The exhausted poet relapsed into prose for the rest of the Yasht, if he is to be held responsible for it. The verse part is quoted—and it really is no burlesque—as an average specimen of the literary quality of the later Yashts, and because it is self-contained, and shows that the use of this kind of spell was well established before the art of verse-writing was utterly lost.

Now this practice of putting together names of God for study and repetition is one which is found in other religions, and deserves attention as having potentially real religious value. It is not a mere spell, provided that the names are understood, although in this context we see it in great danger of becoming such. Obviously a genuine worshipper in solemnly repeating the names or attributes of Deity is engaged on a meditation that may be richly fruitful. In order then to be scrupulously fair to the Later Avesta, we may well repeat this catalogue of divine names. Let us recall by way of preface that the very lateness of the Yasht is suggestive here. From a literary point of view it has little enough value, and cannot for a moment be compared with the richly mythological poems of the earlier

age, when a quasi-Vedic polytheism was reigning with limited restraint. But the liturgical exaltation of the Supreme Deity in this piece takes us into an age of real reformation, when there were men who really cared. These then are the two lists of titles: we may abbreviate by leaving out the mere framework.

1. One to be questioned. 2. Herd-giver. 3. Strong (??). 4. Asha Vahishta. 5. All Mazdah-made Asha-born Good. 6. Understanding. 7. Understanding one. 8. Intelligence. 9. Intelligent. 10. Holiness (Beneficence). 11. Holy (Beneficent). 12. Ahura (Lord). 13. Mightiest. 14. Beyond reach of enmity. 15. Unconquerable. 16. Mindful of desert.[1] 17. All-discerning. 18. Healer. 19. Creator. 20. Mazdah (Wise). (*Yt.* $7^{8}$.)

After the short drop into 'poetry', as quoted above, another list begins. This time there are no numerals attached. It is clear that this list is independent in origin.

Protector. Creator. Maintainer. Knower. Holiest Spirit. Best Healer. Priest. Best Priest. Ahura Mazdah. Righteous. Most Righteous. Glorious. Most Glorious. Wide-seeing. Widest-seeing. Far-seeing. Farthest-seeing. Watcher. Tracker. Creator. Protector. Maintainer. Knower. Best Knower. Cattle-owner. Word of the Cattle-owner. Desiring Dominion. Most Desiring Dominion. Mild of Dominion. Most Mild of Dominion.

Who cannot deceive. Free from Deceit. Protector. Destroyer of malice. Conqueror at one stroke. All-conqueror. All-creator. All-blessing. Wide-blessing. Blessed.

Of mighty benefits. Of mighty beneficence. Powerful. Most powerful. Asha. High. Dominant. Most dominant. Of good insight. Of best insight. Who sees afar. (*Yt.* $1^{12-15}$.)

Ahura Mazdah goes on to promise blessing to him who repeats these names when he 'riseth up or lieth down', when he binds on or unties his girdle, when he goes forth from house or town or country. He shall be safe from the foe and all his weapons. Here the verse returns. If Bartholomae's reading of the first line is correct, it is the first list that is now referred to, with its twenty titles. The

[1] Quoted from a Gatha. *Ys.* $32^{6}$.

verse, after the first line, is identical with one in the much older Yasht to the Fravashis.

> But those Twenty Names shall guard him
> From behind and all around him,
> From the Falsehood Spirit near him,
> From the cruel Varena devil,
> From the heretic (??) destructive,
> From the fiendly All-destroyer. (*Yt.* 1[19].)

Their use is more ritual than meditative, a failing not always absent in Christianity. But there was always the possibility that the repetition might become intelligent. The Names are far from comprehensive, but as food for meditation on the Divine Attributes they might be truly helpful to a worshipper who resolutely put magic aside. It was hard to do that, with page after page of the Avesta full of the merits of fourfold repetition of fiend-smiting words, and all the rest of this too-familiar abracadabra to which the perversity of the human mind has clung so tenaciously for innumerable generations, to save itself the trouble of real prayer.

The allied subject of ceremonial will occupy us later. We have taken some aspects of Prayer as bearing on the doctrine of God, to which we now return, to describe the position of the inferior divinities as they stand in the completed Avestan system. There is the monotheistic deity, Ahura Mazdah (or *Hormuzd*, as the Parsis now give the name), unchallengeably supreme, but in practice removed to a great distance by the intervention of so many lower claimants of worship. Next come the Amesha Spentas (Ameshaspands), archangels now, and theoretically superior to all others after the Deity: the theoretical superiority, much overclouded in the period of the Yashts, has become real when the Avesta is complete. If these are the Parsi archangels we have not to look far for the saints. We shall return to the Fravashis presently, but we will note here that ancestor-worship, the most persistent of all the rivals of monotheism, has been conceived in a manner

which endangers the glory due to God alone. We should probably set them above the other angels (the Yazatas, Yazads), of whom the chief have been already named. The Yashts enable us to see their importance. A good indication of the relative prominence of the heavenly beings is found in the dedications of the days of the Parsi month, as given in the Sirozahs. The month has thirty days, and is divided into two weeks of seven days and two of eight. The first day of each week is sacred to Ahura Mazdah and the Amesha Spenta: it is named accordingly (except Hormuzd day) from the day that follows. The table is as follows:

1. Ahura Mazdah.
2. Good Thought (*Vohu Manah*).
3. Best Right (*Asha Vahishta*).
4. The Kingdom to be desired (*Khshathra Vairya*).
5. Holy Devotion (*Spenta Aramaiti*).
6. Salvation (*Haurvatat*).
7. Immortality (*Ameretat*).
8. (Day before Ātar).
9. Fire (Ātar).
10. Waters (*Ardvī Anāhitā*).
11. Sun (*Hvare*).
12. Moon (*Māh*).
13. Sirius (*Tishtrya*).
14. Cattle (*Geush urvan*).
15. (Day before Mithra).
16. Mithra.
17. Obedience (*Sraosha*).
18. Justice (*Rashnu*).
19. The Fravashis.
20. Victory (*Verethraghna*).
21. Air (*Vayu*).[1]
22. Wind (*Vāta*).
23. (Day before Daenā).
24. Religion (*Daenā*).
25. Destiny (*Ashi Vanguhī*).

[1] The title of the day is *Ram*, that is *Raman Huastra*, 'Peace guardian of pastures'. His relation to Vayu is not clear. It is Vayu who claims the Yasht corresponding.

26. Rectitude (*Arshtāt*).
27. Heavens (*Asman*).
28. Earth (*Zam*).
29. Holy Word (*Manthra Spenta*).
30. Boundless Light (*Anaghra raocah*).

Two very important genii, prominent in the Yashts, are strangely not commemorated, viz. Haoma and the Hvarenah, or 'Kingly Glory'. The names of the months are selected from these: they belong successively to the Fravashis, Asha, Haurvatat, Tishtrya, Ameretat, Khshathra, Mithra, Anahita, Atar, Daena, Vohu Manah, and Aramaiti.

The adoration of these heavenly beings is a matter of supreme importance. This is best seen in typical quotations taken from the older part of the Yashts. First as to the Fravashis.

> Of the vigour, might and glory,
> Help, support, I tell thee truly,
> Spitama, in Them residing,
> Them the Spirits of the Righteous,
> Strong, victorious around us,—
> How they come to me for helping,
> How they brought assistance to me,
> Those strong Spirits of the Righteous,
> By their brightness and their glory,
> Zarathushtra, I stay from ruin
> Yonder heavens sublime and shining,
> That the whole earth doth encompass.[1] (*Yt.* 13[1-2].)

Mazdah goes on to say how by the power and the glory (*hvarenah*) of the Fravashis he maintains the Water-spirit, the Earth, and all their activities, and brings to birth children conceived in the womb. By them the sun and moon and stars go upon their way.

We turn to the Yasht in honour of Tishtrya, or Sirius, the angel of the rains. He appeals to men for sacrifice and oblation, and when he is defeated by the drought-demon Apaosha he sets it down to the absence of these offerings.

[1] Continued in *E. R. P. P.*, p. 146.

But here we have to note the distribution of verse and prose, the latter being a very obvious later accretion, showing us how the later age—very probably the Sassanian—took pains to heighten every thing that exalted the ceremonial.

Tishtrya then away he fleeth
From the shore of Vourukasha[1]
On a mile-long path he fleeth:
Woeful, sorrowful he crieth,
'Woe is me, Ahura Mazdah!
Plants and Waters, sorrow cometh!
Doom for thee, O Faith of Mazdah!

Men do not worship me now with a worship that names my name, as other Yazatas are worshipped with a worship that names their name. If men were to worship me with a worship that names my name, even as other Yazatas are worshipped with a worship that names their name,

Then the strength I should have won me
Strength of horses ten, ten camels,
Ten bulls, mountains ten, ten rivers'.

'I who am Ahura Mazdah worship him with a worship that names his name,

So the needed strength I win him,
Strength of horses ten, ten camels,
Ten bulls, mountains ten, ten rivers.' (*Yt.* 8[23–25].)

There has been a rather interesting prose interpolation, brought in by liturgiologists in the interests of invocation pronouncing the name of the divinity. We are very familiar with this usage. It begins with a kind of magical purpose, since the appropriate name is a part of the divinity's proper being, and therefore a sure way of compelling his intervention. But it is well calculated to develop into a simple aid to faith. We have no means of knowing whether in the oldest version Ahura Mazdah offered this sacrifice. For our present purpose this does not matter: it stands in the text, which Parsis do not treat critically, and we of course criticize with full knowledge that we may make mistakes. What does this 'worship' mean? Clearly it is a means of magically bringing renewed

[1] The mythical World-ocean.

vigour to the spiritual being in question, who must be thus reinvigorated by spiritual food and drink. If men do not perform this necessary office, the Supreme Deity must do it. A Parsi scholar explained the whole relation of Mazdah to his angels thus: We may ask our servants to help us in getting something done, but this does not compromise our superior status. He admitted that the language was 'exaggerated': it is risky to possess no word for 'worship' but one that can be used indiscriminately of the Deity and of angels and saints. There is real danger that such worship will tend to become in all essentials the same thing.

It is no part of our purpose to examine the Yazads in detail, and describe their several functions. The general impression of the whole system concerns us more just now. The monotheism of the Later Avestan religion has already suggested a very obvious parallel in the history of Christianity. The Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox system in this respect does not materially differ from the Parsi. Monotheistic theory is intact, but unguarded terms have sometimes been used concerning the various departments of human life as though they were specially under the charge of subordinate spiritual beings. And just as we do not address the Head of the State when we need the intervention of public authority, but appeal now to the local postmaster, now to a judge, and under very special conditions to a Secretary of State, so does a Parsi pray to Haoma for wisdom, to Verethraghna for victory, always naming the Yazad after Ahura Mazdah and the Ameshaspands, but with his thought concentrated on the Yazad all the same. Many a Christian peasant prays after a like manner. The monotheistic theology is preserved, but it can hardly be said that monotheistic religion remains. For when prayer is made to any being but God, He is *ipso facto* thrust out from the sphere which He claims as His own. The analogy of a human state, or a human business concern, is utterly fallacious when we are thinking of God, since the supreme head of the human institution is only a man at best but abler and better

informed than other men. We compromise fatally our conception of the wisdom and the power of God as soon as we cease to go direct to Him in all our needs. Prayer is the final test of any real monotheism, and the name is really misleading as soon as prayer is offered to any spirit less than God Himself.

We will take next the doctrine of the Fravashis, as leading us naturally to that of the Hereafter. The composite character of these spirits has been already observed, and the great importance of the work for which Mazdah needs their help. An analysis of the distribution of prose and verse in the very long Yasht devoted to their praise is useful as showing that all the main features of the doctrine were current in the old period when verse was freely used. One of the principal exceptions is the passage in which the Fravashis came appealing for praise and sacrifice from men. It is perhaps rather welcome to us when we find that this does not belong to the writing that comes from the age when literature had not quite gone to sleep. Another point of interest is the lateness of passages exaggerating the worship of Zarathushtra: to this point we will return. The pages of prose which figure in the text are mostly covered with the names of the saints—*quae versu dicere non est.* They strike us powerfully by the fact that they are without exception unknown to history, after the age of Zarathushtra himself. This is of signal importance, as we have already seen, from the inevitable deduction that the history of the Religion, between the Prophet's time and that of the prose Avesta, was located in a region which does not touch the annals of the outside world.

The Fravashis were on one side simply the Fathers (Sanskrit *Pitaraḥ*), the beloved ancestors, generally acting in the mass. They watched over the welfare of their posterity, promoted birth, protected their grateful worshippers in battle, and even exercised a world activity, as we saw above (p. 98). It is on this side that the cult of the Fravashis is most pro-

minent to-day. The last five days of the twelfth month, with the five extra days (named after the Five Gathas) which make up the 365, are the Farvardigan Festival, during which the Fravashis revisit the homes of their beloved relatives. This All Souls festival is world-wide, and unmistakable in character.

But the Yasht itself soon shows us that the Fravashis were very far from being only, or even mainly, the venerated Dead. There is a very clear order of precedence in this stanza:

> These, O Spitama, are strongest
> Of the Spirits of the Righteous,
> Even those of First Believers,
> Or those unborn men, the Future
> Saviours, the world's Restorers.
> Of the rest, the Spirits are stronger,
> Zarathushtra, of the living
> Than the Spirits of the departed. (*Yt.* 13[17].)

We will not stop to speculate on the reason, but only note that Parsi thought never fell under the dominion of that sheer terror which the thought of ghosts inspired in most parts of the world. No people afraid of ghosts would have thought the living mightier than the dead. In so far as the Fravashis are ghosts, their kindly aspect is always to the fore. They keep a constant beneficent watch over their own. In war they help them with puissant force of arms: in the home they are the mother's hope and stay through her weary months of waiting. When we think of the inarticulate terror of the Dead which makes its deep mark upon so many religions, we set it down to the credit of Later Avestan religion that they who love and helped in life are not imagined to have forgotten their old tenderness because they have been through the great mysterious change.

Meanwhile we have observed that living men have their Fravashi, and at least certain men who are not yet born. Let us reinforce this last statement.

> Of the Twain Great Powers' creations
> These at the World's End are mightiest,

Even these, the good, the powerful,
Kindly Spirits of the Righteous.
In that day they stood to action
When the Twain Powers made Creation,
Even the Kindly Power and the Fiendly.
(*Yt.* 13[76].)[1]

The Fravashis therefore were among the first of the Good Creation, and took some part in the very outset of the struggle between Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu. What that part was is not stated, and it is Good Thought and the Fire that intervened to prevent the Fiend from damming the waters and stopping the growth of plants.

Next we read that the Ameshaspands and the principal Yazads have their Fravashis. The prose adds one for Ahura Mazdah himself: we also hear of Fravashis attached to communities. It is clear that the Fravashi is a spiritual element belonging to intelligences divine and human. In two prose passages of the Yasht we find the immaterial parts of intelligent creatures classified under five categories.

We worship the effectual Thoughts, the Selves of the Future Deliverers we worship; the Souls we worship; those of tame animals we worship [&c.—other animals]; the Fravashis we worship. (*Yt.* 13[74].)

We worship now the Vitality, the Self, the Perception, the Soul, the Fravashi of the First Believers, the First Hearers of the Lore, of righteous men and women who have struck a blow for Right. (Ib. 13[149]; cf. 13[155].)

The first of these passages has an imperfect list: the second represents the psychology current throughout the Avestan period.[2] In later times the second and the third were ejected, to make room for 'body' and 'image', the latter defined as 'that which is before the Lord Auharmazd'.[3] It was also laid down that at death the Fravashi and the Soul united.

[1] Spenta Mainyu and Angra (Mainyu). I have rendered *Power* here, as *Spirits* was wanted for *Fravashayo*. *Spenta* is the word often rendered *holy*: see p. 28. Note the very otiose prose gloss.
[2] See *E. Z.*, p. 256 f.
[3] *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, 992.

We may give here then the careful definition of Bartholomae:

> *Fravašay*, a term for the immortal part peculiar to the believer, the element which existed before his birth and will survive him. During the believer's life, his F. watches as a guardian angel over him. The community of F. however plays a part like that of the Indian *pitárah*, the Roman *manes*.

The Doctrine expressly provides for pre-existence. According to the Bundahish, a work which probably contains a good deal of lost Avestan material, the Fravashis originally received a choice between remaining in heaven and joining the fight against evil by linking themselves with man. In this way they became strongly individualized, and at death, united with the soul, form a spiritual unity that lives on for ever. What happened to the Fravashi of a bad man is never defined. In some way we must suppose it detached from the man over whom it watched at the first, perhaps to rejoin the great host of impersonal Fravashis. To define these more precisely is hard. They impersonate collective unities, like the Angels of the Churches in the Apocalypse, and they are supposed to belong to all good creations. In the practical doctrine there is little thought of but the Fravashi as an immortal spirit preserving the continued life of a dead ancestor.

The eschatology of the Later Avesta does not really differ from the Gathic, except for the note of universalism, for which see below. There are Yazads brought in who are not named in the Gathas and the picturesque side is developed in some directions. Most conspicuously is this the case with the beautiful portrayal of the passage of the soul from the body into heaven and hell in the piece known as Hadhokht Nask or incorrectly as Yasht XXII.[1] This is wholly Gathic in its spirit, and is essentially an expansion of Zarathushtra's doctrine that the *Daenā* or Self is the determinant of every one's destiny. We have the intermediate place, the limbo of those

[1] There is an attempt to reproduce its spirit in English verse at the end of *E. R. P. P.*

whose merits and demerits balance, named (*misvāna gātu*, 'place of the mixed') but not described. The development of eschatology is seen in the teaching about the destiny of the world as a whole. The *Frashokereti* or Renovation is to be accomplished through Saošyant, who now becomes the last of three sons miraculously born to Zarathushtra ages after his death. The Fravashis have been watching over his vital energy, preserved in the mythic Lake Vourukasha, till the time shall come. Saoshyant in the Gathas denoted Zarathushtra and his helpers; but as the Renovation did not come in his time, later thought had to postpone the date, but kept up its connexion with the Prophet. The Sassanian theologians were enabled to fix the exact date, which we may expect in the year A.D. 2398, if West has correctly read the Pahlavi evidence—and he had a habit of being right. The years 398 and 1398 were on the same system the epochs of Saoshyant's two predecessors. Unfortunately nothing at all noteworthy is recorded for those dates: for the verification of the third epoch we must wait and see. Something did happen four centuries before the first of these epochs which fulfilled all Zarathushtra's highest aspirations. When that epoch is recognized in the Parsi calendar, the outlook for the Religion will be bright.

Magian visions of the final triumph of Good are very clearly set forth in the pages of Plutarch, who seems to have depended largely on Theopompus, a Greek writer of Alexander's time. The advantage of a reliable date is partly offset by the traits in Plutarch's description which clearly point to Magi and not to orthodox Zoroastrians: on these see the notes upon the passage in *E. Z.*, pp. 401 ff. We may quote, however, the part of it which describes the Renovation:[1]

> And Theopompus says that, according to the Magi, for three thousand years in succession the one of these gods (Horomazes and Areimanios)

[1] *Isis and Osiris*, ch. xlvii. There are many difficulties, which are discussed in my notes, *l. c.*

rules and the other is ruled: for the next three thousand they fight and war and break up one another's dominions; but finally Hades is to be deserted, and men will become happy, neither needing food nor casting shadows, while the god who brought these things to pass is quiet and rests for a season, not a long one for a god, but moderately long as it were for a man that sleeps.

This passage makes a good transition to the doctrine of Evil in the Later Avesta, which remains to be discussed. The Renovation in the later system becomes a total wiping out of evil, with implications that not only limbo but hell will be purged, and even sinners restored to righteousness. The kingdom of Evil has been very much developed since the time of the Gathas. The exact balancing of good creations and evil reaches its climax in the Vendidad, but there is evidence that the Magi would have made it more systematic. Plutarch's account of them implies that each of the Ameshaspands had an *ἀντίτεχνος*, an evil archangel answering exactly. The working out of this system in Avestan texts is decidedly perfunctory, but the principle is recognized.

The first point to note is that the 'Enemy Spirit' (*Angra Mainyu*, Pahl. *Aharman* or *Ahriman*, *Ἀρειμάνιος*) is now the prince of evil, instead of Falsehood (*Druj*) as in the Gathas. A casual Gathic phrase has been taken up and made the standing term. It is needless to enumerate the several fiends whose names figure largely in the Avesta. They are mostly much less definite in their character and attributes than the Ameshaspands and Yazads against whom they are pitted. The balancing principle comes out in such texts as the first 'Fargard' of the Vendidad, where Angra Mainyu successfully counter-creates evils to spoil the fair lands made by Ahura Mazdah. Another curious example is the setting apart of a whole series of terms used only for creatures of the evil creation. They have 'pates' and 'shanks', as we might render, answering to the 'heads' and 'legs' of Mazdah's creatures: a demonic being 'screams' or 'shambles', where good beings 'speak' or 'run'. We note also the animals

assigned to Angra Mainyu, which it is the duty of the faithful to kill.

The speculative question arises whether this view of Evil ought to be called dualistic. It is largely after all a matter of terms. If we choose to define dualism as depending on the balancing of good powers and evil, we may regard the terms as justifiable. Dr Casartelli[1] elects to use it, on the ground that the Parsi Evil Spirit is independent, and can create. Against this there is the important consideration that the outlook is optimist. The terms might be used with some appropriateness of the present situation in that God is believed to be limited by the opposition of evil powers who are destined to be overthrown at the End.

The theoretic difference between the Parsi and Christian doctrine would be that in the former He *cannot* 'kill debbil' until the time, in the latter He *will* not, but determines to destroy evil not by force but by love. It must however be noted against this definition of Parsi doctrine that in practice the 'Fiendly spirit' of the Later Avesta was an 'ineffectual angel' of darkness. Of the Magi, as responsible for the theology of the Later Avesta, we see no reason to withdraw an estimate formed before the present-day outcome of their teaching had been observed in India.[2]

> The interpreters of Zarathushtra busied themselves with explaining the world where they should have tried to save it; they spent in dreams about its future blessedness the energy that might have produced a diagnosis of its deepest needs, and some contribution towards their satisfaction. The result was a shallow optimism from which real understanding of Zarathushtra himself might have saved them. The very devil against whom they fought was a poor sort of demon after all, contending with plenty of noise but with no sort of success: he could be conquered by muttering a Gatha and killing some frogs. And Evil is a greater and more dreadful fact than anything represented in the Magian Ahriman. The shadows were not dark enough because the light had grown dim since Zarathushtra's day.

The solvent which has so seriously weakened the conception

[1] In *E. R. E.* v. 111 f.

[2] *E. Z.*, p. 329 f.

of Ahriman is of course the growth of ceremonial. Priestly religions inevitably lose the sense of proportion, offences against ritual being so heinous that real sins lose caste. The Vendidad is the very acme of absurdity in this respect. Let us take it first at its best, the interesting First Fargard, in which the countries made by Ahura Mazdah are enumerated, and then the counter-creations by which Angra Mainyu spoiled each of them in turn. We will just set down these counter-creations as they came, omitting some doubtful ones:

> The Serpent—Winter—Locusts—Unbelief—Weeping and wailing—the Sorceress Khnanthaiti (said to be idolatry)—evil inhabitants—unnatural vice (no atonement)—burying dead (no atonement)—witchcraft—excessive unbelief—cooking of dead matter (no atonement)—untimely issues and (1) non-Aryan rulers—(2) untimely heat—winter and Taozyan (?) rulers. (*Vd.* 1.)

Note here the extraordinary mixture of ethical evils, ritual evils, and ordinary hardships. The sins for which there is no atonement ought to be specially noted. Lest however we condemn the Magi too severely for their utter confusion of values, we may remember that the first generation of Christians, brought up in a ritual atmosphere, showed a very similar lack of perspective: they seem to have been almost as much afraid of eating 'things strangled' as of committing 'fornication'.[1] We may supplement this very important point in ethical theory by collecting the sins which in the Later Avesta belonged to the *pešotanu* category.[2] They include repeated assaults for which reparation has not been made. Homicide indulged in a second time comes into the list. Next figures bringing fire back into a house where some one had died within a month, sowing or watering ground on which a dog or man has died within a year, neglecting to search for traces of the corpse on the piece of ground, throwing on the ground some part of a corpse, neglecting to fasten down a corpse when leaving it to the vultures. A woman who has had a stillborn child may drink water to save her life but

[1] Acts $15^{29}$.

[2] See references, *E. Z.*, p. 390.

incurs the penalty of a *Pešotanu*. So does a man who gives bad food to a shepherd's dog, or who imperfectly muzzles a mad dog and allows it to fall into a hole. The same happens if one scares a pregnant bitch and she comes to grief in a hole. Side by side with this come certain offences against morality. Finally, in another ritual work, we find that to prevent a faithful man from chanting the Gathas for half a year incurs the same guilt.

Now a *pešotanu*, 'one whose body is forfeit,' is subject to a uniform penalty, the nature of which must detain us a moment. It is '200 strokes with a horse-whip, 200 with the whip of correction'. Whether these are concurrent is not quite clear; but assuming they are, there is still some grim humour in allowing the poor disappointed mother to drink water to save her life, only to undergo a penalty which would make the boon of questionable value. We soon find that the tariff of stripes is a mere matter of comic opera. To kill a man carries ninety, to kill a water dog (otter) ten thousand, and so forth. The conviction soon suggests itself that all this priestly pomposity is not meant to be taken seriously. Later tradition even fixes the terms of commutation at a rate which makes one stripe answer to six rupees. Even so, one wonders whether at any time all mothers of stillborn children paid £80 for a drink of water. Otter-hunting, moreover, is no doubt the sport of the idle rich: humanitarians would however soon attain their end if the price of a kill were fixed at £4,000. The fact is, of course, that these Magian writers have been—to put it nakedly—putting silly rubbish into the mouth of the Deity, who solemnly sets forth these penalties in answer to Zarathushtra's questions. A translation of this stuff is a completer *reductio ad absurdum* than all the strong language in 'Wilson on the Parsi Religion'. And yet the whole Vendidad, which has many other passages on the same plane as this, is solemnly recited at a ceremony described as most impressive, beginning at midnight and lasting through many hours. The object of the same is the consecration of *gomez*

for ritual use. What *gomez* means, we will explain later: for the present it is allowable to leave it wrapt up in its convenient foreign tongue.

It is a distasteful task to dwell on the drivelling nonsense which fills so large a part of the Vendidad. The reflexion that it is bound up with the Gathas is the impulse of one's sorrow and indignation at what might otherwise be only an amusing monument of human folly. We will be content with one more exhibition of the sense of proportion discoverable in this strange book. We quote exactly this time, and without comment:

> Creator of the material world, Righteous One. If a man should perform a cleansing ceremony who is not acquainted with the Law of the Mazdah religion concerning purifications, how can he attack the fiend (*Druj*) which from the dead flies upon the living? how can he attack the corpse-demon (*Nasu*) which from the dead flies upon the living?
>
> Then said Ahura Mazdah: One might truly think, O Spitama Zarathushtra, the corpse fiend (*Druj Nasu*) grows far stronger than she was before, she (increases) the diseases, the destructions, the disasters, beyond what they were before.
>
> Creator (&c.). What is the penalty for it?
>
> Then said Ahura Mazdah: The worshippers of Mazdah shall put him in fetters, first shall they fetter his hands, his clothes shall they strip off, his head shall they cut off as far down as the hair goes; they shall give over his corpse to the greediest of the corpse-eating creatures made by Spenta Mainyu, the vultures, saying
>
> This man renounces all his evil thoughts, words, and deeds.
>
> And if he has committed other ill deeds, the penalty therefor is settled. If he has committed no other ill deed, the settlement is for ever and ever. (*Vd.* $9^{47-49}$.)

A more pleasing subject is the general ethics of the Avestan system. When we eliminate the mere ritual offences, the code becomes sane and pure. The standard of truth and honesty is unflinchingly high. The Yasht dedicated to Mithra maintains with the utmost emphasis the duty of keeping the pledged word under all conditions, even with an unbeliever. The very name of Mithra means 'contract', and there is

reason to believe that the Later Avestan Yazad is primarily derived from a god answering to the Roman Fides, and only secondarily invested with physical characteristics derived from the other Mithra, whose name is independent and his history originally distinct.[1] The terrors of Mithra for the *Miθrodruj*, the Contract-breaker, are set forth in vivid poetical form, and it is declared that there is no deceiving the Genius of Light under whose glory all secret things are clear. We may quote the lines which touch the highest ethical level:

> Spitama, break not the Contract,
> Made with sinner, made with faithful
> Comrade in thy Law, for Mithra
> Stands for sinner, stands for faithful. (*Yt.* $10^{2}$.)

And again:

> He from whom true Glory fleeth,
> From the straightest path forwandered,
> In his inmost heart hath sorrow.
> Thus he thinketh, that Inglorious,
> 'Blind is Mithra: all the ill deeds,
> All the lying words, he sees not'.
> But, for me, I think within me,
> 'Surely nowhere under heaven
> Is a worldly man who thinketh
> Evil thoughts to match the good thoughts
> Of the spiritual Mithra'. (*Yt.* $10^{105}$ f.)

It is fitting that the hymn which extols a Genius of so much moral splendour should contain one of the rare flights of real poetry to be found in the Later Avesta. It interests us specially from its kinship with that gem of the *Odyssey* of which Lucretius made Latin as lovely, and Tennyson crowned with a place in his picture of the 'island valley of Avilion'.

> For him Mazdah the Creator
> Reared a palace on the Mountain,
> Alburz, with its hills encircled,
> Glorious, where nor night nor darkness
> Climbs, nor blows the chill, the searching

[1] See this discussed in *E.Z.*, pp. 63–7.

Wind, nor sickness comes death-dealing,
Nor the devil-born pollution;
Nor upon that Mighty Mountain
Are the dark clouds seen ascending.[1] (*Yt.* 10[50].)

Next to Truth may stand Industry, a virtue which is so conspicuous in the Gathas that its dethronement in the later religion would have been very significant. The pre-eminence of Agriculture as the field of energy is by no means so clear: social conditions had very largely changed. But Sloth, called by the expressive name of 'Going-to-be' (*Būšyąsta*), is a conspicuous demon; and the cock which wakes men to work is a leader in the hosts of the Good Spirit. Of two bedfellows who hear the cock crowing, the one who gets up first will first enter Paradise.

Sexual relations are regulated in the Parsi system in a perfectly healthy way. Men and women are placed on a level to an extent unparalleled in any Eastern religion. The depreciatory view of women which inflicts an indelible stain on Hinduism and Islam has no sort of parallel in the Avesta. A natural consequence is that vice is condemned all round with a thoroughness that leaves nothing to be desired. It is strange that by the side of this we should have the notorious insistence of the Magi upon the religious value of the next-of-kin marriage. The horrified Greeks are constantly alluding to their practice of mating with sister and even mother. The authoritative essay of E. W. West[2] makes the Pahlavi books deeply tainted with this doctrine. But this is one of several esoteric doctrines in which the Magi never carried the Zoroastrian community with them. Modern Parsi scholars make strenuous efforts to deny that religious incest was ever inculcated even by the Magi, much less by the Avesta. In the last denial they are certainly right, in spite of even such an authority as Bartholomae.[3] But this only proves that the

[1] The quotations are from *E. R. P. P.*, pp. 137–40, where some other extracts from the Yasht are given.

[2] See *S. B. E.*, vol. xviii, pp. 389–430.

[3] See *E. Z.*, pp. 206 f. I am glad to have my view of *Yt.* 15[35] confirmed

Magi did not get their own way everywhere. It is a point of outstanding interest, as it shows that national temperament, and the inheritance of Zarathushtra, were strong enough to enable the religion to keep its character even when assailed by aliens entrenched in its very citadel. It is not necessary to use the epithet 'immoral' of the Magi, for a practice which Parsi and Christian alike view with the utmost abhorrence. It was obviously maintained with perfect good faith, and in the genuine belief—however originating—that it was a religious duty. It need not therefore be regarded as a taint on the morality of a race of priests whose condemnation of every form of lust is unsparing.

In connexion with this we may take next the allied subject of asceticism. From Zarathushtra down, the witness of Parsi religion has here been unequivocal and undeviating. The Parsi heretic Mani found an easier field for his rigorous doctrine in Christendom than among his own religious kin. Christianity in its early centuries was subjected to influences which produced a very serious aberration from the principles of Christ as set forth in the New Testament. Hence through many ages asceticism was treated as an ideal, and Christian saints were as thoroughgoing as a Hindu ascetic is in their contempt for the body as the source of all evil and the enemy of the soul. We need not assert that the result was wholly evil. It may well have been that the excessive protest against a sensual world was in those days the only one that could make itself heard, and that accordingly the ascetic preserved the ideal of purity for the world in the only effective manner. Be that as it may, there can be no question that the ascetic theory is an indictment of the Creator, and a justification of pessimism. A world which can only exist by indulging a degrading appetite for food and drink, and only prolong

by the high authority of Dr Louis H. Gray. My friend Dastur Darab has done his best to clear the Pahlavi literature; but even if he were right against West, there would remain the Greek evidence, on which he certainly makes no impression at all.

itself into a new age by yielding to a natural impulse which is inherently impure, is a world that does no credit to its Maker. One who holds such a view should logically look, not only with Gautama at the sorrow-stricken and the decrepit, but at the young and strong and beautiful, and declare

> These say the babe is wise
> That weepeth, being born.

Against all these perversions of true Theism, denounced in the Christian Scriptures as 'doctrines of demons',[1] Zoroastrianism in all its history has raised a consistent protest. The Prophet himself, whom the legend declared to have laughed when he was born,[2] was an optimist through and through. One of his Gathas is a marriage hymn, and the marriage hymn of his own daughter. Priests have always been married, and the superior virtue of the married over the celibate has always been an article of faith. Similarly with fasting and austerities: never has any such method of spiritual achievement received the slightest encouragement from Zarathushtra or his successors.[3] Nor has the denial of property, as something inherently evil, found its way into Parsi conceptions of goodness. The question of the effect of this optimist outlook upon the life of the community may be left till we come to that subject. At present it is enough to assure ourselves, in this and other departments of ethics, that obedience to the precepts of the Avesta would produce a clean-living, honest, and trustworthy people. For it is not to be forgotten that the great triad of Word and Thought and Deed has lost none of its prominence, so that if conscience enforced a really strict

[1] 1 Tim. $4^{1-5}$.

[2] See above, p. 75.

[3] This needs qualifying if the Magi are to be regarded as authoritative. Classical writers (see Dhalla, *Zor. Theol.*, p. 186) tell us of sects of Magi which neither kill nor eat anything living, or again eat vegetables, cheese and bread, and sleep on the bare ground, or practise celibacy. If we remember that the Magi were originally independent of Zoroastrianism, and included communities which never embraced it at all, we can accept this well-attested statement without difficulty. These ascetic Magi will in fact be elements in the spiritual ancestry of Gautama and Mahāvīra.

obedience to the letter and spirit of the scripture, conduct would be on a high level. There is no consecrated impurity, no religious sanction of murder, no casuistic defence of lying in these sacred books, even though we cannot honestly repel the charge of triviality, foolishness, and lack of proportion.

On the positive side we must not overlook the strong insistence upon charity. It is limited to the faithful: to minister to a follower of the demons was evidently regarded as equivalent to approval of his wickedness. But every act of almsgiving to the followers of Asha made fairer the Self that was preparing to meet the faithful soul and escort him to heaven. The Yazad Rātā is specially charged with this department of righteousness, and she is an associate of the great Ameshaspand Aramaiti, Devotion or Piety. The fifth day of the month belongs to

> the good holy Aramaiti, the good, far-seeing Mazdah-made righteous Rata. (*Sirozah* $1^5$.)

And in a prayer for prosperity of all kinds to come on the worshipper's house, we read:

> In this house Obedience vanquish
> Disobedience, Peace smite Unpeace,
> Bounty vanquish niggard temper,
> Piety impious rebellion,
> Word true-spoken word false-spoken,
> Asha smite the Druj for ever. (*Yt.* $60^5$.)

It is a comprehensive benediction: he who offers it has only to live up to it, and he will live thereby!

One other subject claims our attention before we pass out of the Avesta and examine the religion as it is to-day. We have depicted the historical Zarathushtra and traced his beliefs and teachings. What about the Prophet in the Later Avesta? Dr Dhalla summarizes the development succinctly.[1] 'Zoroaster is a historical personage in the Gathas. In the Later Avesta he is surrounded by an aureole, and becomes super-

[1] *Zor. Theol.*, p. 195.

human ; but in the Pahlavi works his personality is enshrouded by miracles, and he is transformed into a myth.' The process begins in the age when verse was still written. We may quote from the Yasht of the Fravashis, omitting at first the prose parts. It is a cry of joy at the birth of Zarathushtra :

Mighty, who gives all life's comforts,
The first Teacher of the nations ;
Through whom came the *Ashem Vohu*,[1]
All the Spells in one including ;
Master, Judge[2] of all creation,
He the Law, of all existence
Best, to men himself revealed.
Him the Bountiful Immortals
Longed for—with the Sun accordant,
Glad in faith with heart devoted—
Master, Judge of all creation.
In his birth and his up-growing
Plants and Waters all exulted ;
In his birth and his up-growing
All the creatures of the Holy
Hailed the promise sure of blessing.
'To our prayer is born the Fire-priest,
He, Spitama Zarathushtra ;
He will worship us, with *barsom*,
Duly spread,[3] and with libations.
Lo! henceforth the Law extendeth,
The Good Law of Mazdah-worship.' (*Yt.* $13^{90-94}$.)

This beautiful 'poetry' is accompanied by much prose to the same effect. We hear that the Sage was not only the first Fire-priest, but also the first Warrior and the first Ploughman, and the first to turn his face[4] away from the demons. If the passage were capable of bearing any weight at all, we might see here a hint that Zarathushtra was not a priest at all except

[1] See pp. 90 f.
[2] As in the *Ahuna Vairya* ; see p. 42.
[3] The *barsom*, originally a bundle of boughs (referred to in Ezekiel $8^{17}$), held by the priest before the sacred fire. See *E. Z.*, p. 190, and above, p. 61.
[4] A wrong reading here has caused Darmesteter to suspect a reference to the 'wheel' of Buddhism.

in the way that every head of a family could act as a priest in primitive days of simplicity in worship. Our verse passage will suffice to show that Dr Dhalla's 'aureole' is no fancy, and that it is one for which the Gathas give us no warrant of expectation.

One interesting addition is made in the Vendidad to the spiritual history of Zarathushtra; and if stripped of its fantastic diction it could be regarded as psychologically true. In the 19th Fargard of the Vendidad we read how Ahriman set the fiend Būiti[1] to kill the Prophet. He recited the Ahuna Vairya, sacrificed to the River Daitya, and said his Creed. Būiti retired baffled, and the Prophet, realizing that the demons were bent on killing him, went forward 'unsubdued by the hardness of the malignant riddles of Ill Thought'. Unhappily, we hear no more of these, which might have been interesting. Swinging stones as big as a hut, he went to seek Angra Mainyu. He tells him he means to smite the creation of the demons. The Evil Spirit pleads with him:

> Destroy not my creation, O Righteous Zarathushtra. Thou art Pourushaspa's son, by thy mother was I invoked.[2] Renounce the good Mazdayasnian Law; thou shalt win a boon such as the ruler Vadhaghan won. (*Vd.* 19[6].)

Zarathushtra refuses, though it should mean losing his very life. Angra Mainyu demands by what word or weapon he will destroy the evil creation. And the answer, the climax of a dialogue which hitherto has had something stirring in it, is that the mortar and the cups in which the Haoma is brewed are his weapons, and the Ashem Vohu. So!

This story of the temptation of Zarathushtra has been a happy hunting-ground for those subtle people who have discovered that Gautama was said to have been tempted by a fiend, and Jesus likewise. Temptation being such an unusual experience, it obviously follows that these three stories must

[1] Sanskrit *bhūta*, 'ghost'. Darmesteter compares Buddha!

[2] If he revealed the true religion for the first time, his parents must have followed a false one!

be in some way related. An application of the abstruse mathematical rule known as Combinations will show that there are six possibilities as to the order in which the stories came historically, and therefore as to the priority rights of their several authors. We do not propose to discuss the solemn question, or vindicate the originality of the three experiences. This book is written for the possessors of common sense. Others are welcome to the theory that at the end of a long chapter we wearily shrink from a very difficult problem, fraught with unseen dangers to valued traditions. If so, they may take up the problem themselves. We have honestly provided them with materials.

# BOOK II. THE PARSIS

## CHAPTER 1

### THE COMMUNITY

Lo, it is a people that dwelleth alone,
And shall not be reckoned among the nations.

EVERY visitor to Bombay finds out the Parsi before he has crossed the first street. Slim, spectacled gentlemen, in European dress, except for the white trousers and the black coat buttoned up to the neck, are noticed at once as Parsis from their head-dress, the varnished-paper-covered 'cow's heel' hat, or the round stiff grey felt with its rim of colour standing out. Still more conspicuous are the Parsi ladies, surely the most gracefully dressed women anywhere, with the brilliant colours of their *sari* daintily crossing their black hair and hanging over dresses of European fashion, but of hues that no northern complexion could stand. The visitor who knows only the principal streets of the beautiful cosmopolitan city that keeps the door of India will soon conclude that half the population belongs to this interesting race which he has so soon come to recognize.

As a matter of fact the Parsis when merely counted supply something like four per cent. of the population of Bombay. Their total numbers only amount to a lakh, or a little over. Nearly half of them have crowded into the city which has long been their metropolis. The remaining fifty thousand odd are scattered over various centres in India. By far the largest number are in Gujarat, which as we shall see was the scene of their earliest settlements. The ancient towns of Naosari

and Udwada retain not only historical relics of their early days, but large colonies of residents of the community. Surat, Broach, Ahmedabad, Poona, &c., have a large Parsi population. Karachi, the Land's End of India, has a considerable Parsi colony, which the writer has reason to remember as the first to which he was introduced: right good care they took that the earliest impressions of their community should be very pleasing ones! But indeed those impressions ran no risk of being obliterated elsewhere. In London years ago, in Bombay, in Poona, in Hyderabad (Deccan), in Ootacamund, in Ahmedabad, and last but by no means least in far-away Calcutta, the friendliness of the Parsi people was vividly realized, and their deep interest in everything concerning the honourable history of their small but distinguished race.[1]

The note of intense clannishness, suggested in the last paragraph, is certainly the first one to strike in any description of the Parsis in India or elsewhere. They are found wherever business enterprise may take them. There are said to be some two hundred in London, where they are easily recognized as making themselves at home more readily than any other visitors from the East. Western clothes and Western ways sit naturally on them. By far the most highly educated of the Indian peoples, with English at command throughout the bulk of their number, they are more accessible to Western

[1] The following table of Parsi population is based on one kindly supplied by Dr Modi:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bombay | 50,931 | Haidarabad (Deccan) | 808 |
| Surat | 5,458 | Baroda | 708 |
| Naosari | 4,221 | Nagpur | 547 |
| Karachi | 2,165 | Calcutta | 467 |
| Poona | 2,158 | Gandevi | 461 |
| Broach | 1,948 | Mhow | 427 |
| Ahmedabad | 1,426 | Aden | 384 |
| Bandra | 1,318 | Thana | 378 |
| Bulsar | 1,179 | Bhownagar | 329 |
| Billimora | 812 | Jhansi | 301 |

There are of course many other places, such as Colombo, where there are smaller settlements. I believe there are two hundred or so in London, or were a few years ago. The above table accounts for three-quarters of the community, apart from those in Persia.

ideas than any other Indians. They pride themselves on their loyalty to the Empire, which many of them have served with distinction. They are accordingly well qualified to act as mediators between East and West, for with all their understanding of the West, Eastern they are, and thoroughly Indian in sentiment. A most disproportionate number of them have risen to commanding positions among India's public men. It will be enough to mention one name, that of India's 'Grand Old Man', Dadabhai Naoroji, who a generation ago was sitting in the House of Commons as the first representative of our Eastern Empire, and now is spending[1] the hale, quiet eventide of his ninety years in the pretty bungalow on the coast north of Bombay. Among the dead, none deserves grateful memory more than B. M. Malabari, gentlest and kindliest of souls, fearless in every battle for the weak, and wise beyond any of India's reformers in realizing what she needs most of all. Side by side with these may be remembered the merchant princes whose benefactions impress Parsi names on people who find it difficult to pronounce them. The Imperial Institute in South Kensington has a Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall. The same name is borne by the magnificent Convocation Hall of Bombay University. A people with whom public munificence is a traditional principle, the Parsis have stamped their character on the institutions of many towns in India. Among themselves their charity is noble. No Parsi is allowed to be really in want. Funds for the sick and for the blind and otherwise incapacitated, fine hospitals in which their poor can be treated, and doles of five rupees a month to indigent Parsis, are among the provision they make for their own people. Somewhat under threepence a day does not sound very much like opulence, but in India it is sufficient for a livelihood. When a big Parsi employer of labour tried to get men of his own community to work he found that they would rather do nothing for five rupees a month than work for large wages. Human

[1] Died July 1, 1917, after this work went to press.

nature is much the same in East and West after all: to eat bread and escape paying for it with the sweat of the brow has the fascination of a victory over natural law. It ought to be added, however, in justice to the diligent and careful administrators of these charities, that the number of such artists in indolence must have been small. The utmost care is taken to sift applications; and we may safely assume that the five rupees were earned by much ingenuity in the forging of medical certificates and other requirements imposed by the Parsi Panchāyat upon those who seek assistance from their funds.

At this point a brief excursion into history must be essayed. At the date of writing, the Parsīs are arranging a great *jashan*, or commemoration meeting, to be held on December 10, 1916. The scene is Sanjān, a little place on the Gujarat coast at which a traveller from Bombay to Baroda may alight four or five hours after leaving the former if he avoids the mail train: the distance is ninety-four miles. At this port, just 1,200 years ago, Parsi exiles are said to have landed from Persia and were hospitably received by a Rajah on easy conditions. Persia was being swept by the fanatical hordes of Arabs with fire and sword. The superiority of the Avesta to the Koran availed little at such a time to retain the allegiance of men and women threatened with the usual alternatives of death or apostasy. A scattered, much-persecuted remnant clung to their home and their faith as well: the great majority chose the former and turned Muslim. But others put to sea and sought a new home. The Pilgrim Fathers of Zoroastrianism established their sacred fire in Sanjān, moving on later to Udwada, twenty miles up the coast, and Naosari, another thirty, where their descendants are still settled. The original Sanjān fire is at Udwada now, having been moved thither from Naosari long ago.

The great Danish Orientalist N. L. Westergaard in his edition of the Avesta, suggested doubts as to this poetic record. 'It may well have been the profits of trade, not

persecution, that brought the Parsis to Western India.' The distinguished Parsi scholar, Mr G. K. Nariman, stoutly urges the same view. It is outside our purpose in this work to discuss purely historical questions: we chronicle the difference and pass on. The authority quoted for the story of the migration is a work called *Kissah-i-Sanjan*, written about three centuries ago by a priest of Naosari. It is to be feared that it can hardly be regarded as a first-rate authority until the materials on which the poet based his record are known and found ancient. The matter is under discussion, and there are excellent authorities, especially Dr Modi, in favour of the tradition. But pending decisive confirmation, it is not worth our while to reproduce the story or discuss it. The only point of early history we need set down is that the Parsis still date events by the regnal year of their last king, Yazdegard, who fell in A. D. 651.[1] The epoch is A. D. 631, so that the present year (1916–17) is A. Y. 1286. Naturally this epoch is not used in ordinary everyday practice.

About ten thousand Parsis are still found in Persia to-day, almost all in Yezd and Kirmān. They are said to differ rather markedly in physique from their compatriots in India, being stout and florid and round-headed. About 2,000 of them are traders, as Parsis generally have been; but the Gathic occupation of agriculture has retained the rest.[2] Till about the end of the eighteenth century, their community was always regarded by the Parsis of India as having a certain authority derived from their retention of the ancestral home; and commissions of inquiry were sent from time to time, bringing back judgements (known as *Rivāyats*) on knotty questions of religious law and procedure. Considerable numbers of Iranis, as the Zoroastrians of Persia are called in India, migrate from the imperfect civilization and religious intolerance of Persia to the freedom of Bombay. There they form a slightly separate community, with priests of their own, and customs differing in some respects from the Parsis

[1] *E. B.*, vol. xxi, p. 224 a. [2] So Dr Modi tells me.

who have been in India throughout. In one very prominent feature both Indian and Irani Parsis depend upon a Persian who lived several generations after the Arab conquest, and nominally conformed to Islam. Firdausi's great epic, the *Book of Kings*, is almost as conspicuous as the Avesta itself in the small library of Parsi classics. The *Shah Namch* is the great repository of Persian folk-lore and traditional history. From it Parsis take a large proportion of their personal names; and the fullness of the heroic legends told there in vigorous epic verse compensates for the poverty of the Avesta in this element, so central in the lore of every people that is proud of its past.

We may take Firdausi as our hint for retrospect, though it is no part of our design to collect what vestiges remain of the history of the Parsis since the close of the epoch covered by the former half of this volume. There is one period of past history which is still alive for East and West alike. One, did we say? Nay, there are two, strangely different, and set one against the other as wonderfully instructive foils. Each takes its name from a man who died when a little past thirty, having conquered the world in his brief span. One conquest lasted a very short time, but it left marvellous results behind it: its most permanent result was in the preparation it made for the second Conqueror, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion that which shall not be destroyed. For all that, Alexander was the biggest force the world had ever known up to his own day. It is entirely in accordance with the fitness of things that a town in Southern India should bear his name still. Secunderabad is 2,000 miles away from Alexander's footsteps, which thundered across North India and died away into silence. But even for India Alexander means more than any other name of antiquity—except the Name that is above every name, for India and for the world.

The great protagonist in that romantic struggle of East and West has always been for us a uniquely interesting and

sympathetic figure. For all their points of contact with the West, the Parsis are acutely conscious of their ancestry and 'the accursed Sikander' is vigorously detested. Their patriotism runs occasionally into a repudiation of the Greeks, which produces a curious sensation in the mind of the Western student, who is prone to forget that in the six generations between the Persian invasion of Greece and the Greek invasion of Persia there was another side to be considered. There is a monograph, entitled *Studies in Ancient Persian History*,[1] by a very able young Parsi Indian Civilian, the late P. Kersasp, in which the judgement of the ages is attacked in the most courageous and breath-taking fashion. Marathon and Salamis were mostly mythical, Herodotus was only the Father of tall stories, and the Greeks generally were a much overrated people. The Parsi cavalier tilts more entertainingly than the elephantine champion of out-of-date science, Herbert Spencer, under whose protection he thought himself secure. But the daring futility of his assault is worth recalling as a characteristic and interesting specimen of sympathies still alive to-day.

There is one period in the ages between Alexander and modern times on which the title of this book might permit a little freedom if the writer felt himself either qualified or inclined. In the heyday of Sassanian Zoroastrianism there arose a thinker who historically forms a link between the two religions which are before our minds in this survey. Mani was a Parsi, and the central doctrine he propounded was an exaggeration of the Magian Dualism which we have compared already with the teaching of Zarathushtra. That being so, it is very interesting to observe that Manicheism met with more conspicuous success in Christendom, to which it brought for generations a really insidious danger, than in the country of its birth. The radical antagonism of genuine Parsi theology and practice to anything savouring of asceticism may partly account for this. Whether this is so or not, we need not stay

[1] Kegan Paul, 1915.

to inquire. The speculative philosophy of Mani was ruled by the authorities of his own time to be no genuine part of the Treasure of the Magi, and their decision endorsed by the martyrdom of the heresiarch, who resembled most heresiarchs in seeing difficulties which other people were too dull or prejudiced to see, and solving them by guesses too daring for them to entertain. That the heresiarch guessed wrongly we may easily agree, on our fuller knowledge, and yet cherish much respect for his memory. His judges were right in declaring his doctrine incongruent with Parsi traditional theology. We from our side may with still stronger emphasis declare that his caskets contained nothing which could possibly be accepted in Bethlehem.

We proceed accordingly to leap over many centuries in which we know little or nothing of the Parsis, and come to modern times. This means the epoch which began with Anquetil du Perron. Till the West began to study the Parsis, they had no history that has survived. The learned and still useful treatise of Thomas Hyde, Professor in Oxford 200 years ago, does not constitute an exception, for Hyde got his information from ancient sources. The sight of a few pages of the Avesta, copied from the Bodleian MS. and exhibited in the Bibliothèque du Roi in Paris, fired young Anquetil with the ambition to open a book with seven seals. His romantic journey to India, his adventures in the ultimately successful enterprise of persuading the Dasturs to teach him the secrets of their books, form a story of great interest, but not one that concerns us here. Our present point is that the history of the Parsis takes a new start from the year 1770, when Anquetil's Avesta was published and set the Orientalist world debating. From that day to the present, the Parsis have been more or less in touch with the West, and information about them has been increasingly accessible.

To what extent Anquetil du Perron was admitted by his Parsi teachers into the secrets of the community is a question warmly debated among their present successors. He himself

declared that he had been taken by Dastur Darab into a Fire-temple, the inside of which when the fire is there no outsider is permitted to see. To escape a conclusion so compromising, Parsi scholars of to-day have been busy casting doubts on his veracity, making the most of his vanity and other small weaknesses, and suggesting that having been shown—like the present writer—the interior of a Fire-temple when the fire had been removed temporarily to another chamber, he suppressed this material fact and boasted of having seen the penetralia just as the Parsis themselves behold them. It is impossible to decide the question, which only concerns the record of one high priest of a century and a half ago. It may well be that strictness was less marked in those days, or that the Dastur in question was neglectful. The fact that the Parsis are so anxious even to clear the memory of Dastur Darab in a matter that seems to us very inconsiderable, is more important than their success or failure in achieving their purpose.

The point is in fact nothing less than an outward and visible sign of the essential character of the Parsi religion as it emerges after the ages that separate it from the conditions described above out of the sacred literature. It will therefore serve well as a starting-point for our delineation of the Parsis as they are.

Perhaps the most significant of the broad general characteristics by which we classify religions is that by which we set Christianity and Islam on one side as essentially propagandist, against the mass of religions which make no effort by force or persuasion to extend their sphere of influence. Classing the Cross and the Crescent together in this regard does not of course imply that the motives of propagandism are the same: we are just now only concerned with the result. Non-proselytizing religions regard their gods as belonging exclusively to a community, large or small. They recognize other divinities in the same way as we recognize the rulers of other nations: they may be allied, neutral, or

hostile, but we owe them no allegiance and have no claim upon them for favours. The classical instance of this attitude is of course ancient Israel. From the first, their Yahweh was a purely tribal Deity, and the belief in His world-wide power and sovranty was developed gradually. More frequently the development has been in the opposite direction: a religion which in its early enthusiasm was fervently propagandist gradually loses the desire to extend itself, and the community settles down to enjoy its privileges exclusively.

This has been especially the case in India, where the caste system, so deeply ingrained in the religion of the vast majority, has profoundly influenced the creeds which invaded the country in later times. The oldest of these, Syrian Christianity, through many centuries lived on caste privileges and resented any thought of preaching the Gospel to them that are without: only in our own time a section of it is beginning to realize the mission it has so clear a call to fulfil. Multitudes of Muhammadans live in caste. The Cochin Jews are organized as two castes. For Hinduism, of course, religion is a matter of birth entirely, though it asserts a claim to Indians as such, and absorbs aboriginals where it can.

This is probably the main factor in the development of the immense contrast between the Parsis of to-day and the Mazdayasnians of the Sassanian age. There was not indeed in that age any very considerable outside propaganda: the fanaticism of orthodox monarchs worked itself out in the most stringent measures against Persians who accepted Christianity —a feature the spirit of which survives intact. The passion for 'converting all mankind' did not communicate itself in any effective form to the Prophet's successors. The contrast between past and present is that between a populous nation, proudly cherishing a religion they are still ready to share, and a caste of a little over a hundred thousand souls, compassing sea and land to frustrate the making of a proselyte.

As late as the sixteenth century of our era we have some evidence that Parsis were still anxious to make converts. We

may quote a passage from the useful record of Parsi history in the *Bombay Gazetteer* (1898), p. 190:

> In A. D. 1587, at the request of the emperor Akbar, they sent learned priests both from Naosari and from Kirman in Persia to explain the Zoroastrian faith. They found Akbar a ready listener and a willing believer and taught him their peculiar terms, ordinances, rites, and ceremonies. Akbar issued orders that the sacred fire should be made over to the charge of Abul Fazl, and that after the manner of the kings of Persia in whose temples blazed perpetual fires Fazl should take care that the sacred fire was never allowed to go out either by night or by day, for that it was one of the signs of God and one light from among the many lights of his creation. . . . According to the Parsi account Akbar was invested with the sacred shirt and girdle (Dabistan iii. 93-6).

The three following centuries, if this account is true, have witnessed a marked change.

It is literal fact that the one subject on which Parsis to-day will grow warm is that of proselytism. An appreciative visitor praises the teaching of Zarathushtra, and implores the Parsis to pass their treasures on to people who spend all their days subject to the bondage of a degrading doctrine of God. At once the organ of the 'Reforming' party claims him as an ally in their campaign for taking outsiders into the community—however carefully he has explained that a domestic question of that kind is no business of his. And next day the *Cup of Jamshid*, organ of the 'Orthodox', calls the luckless man all the names it can.

Not many years ago a member of a very wealthy Parsi family married a French lady, who was all eagerness to accept the religion. A high priest was found to admit her to the *Naojote*, or initiation ceremony. But the majority of the Parsis fought hard against her being allowed the privileges belonging to born members of the caste. The law was invoked, and ultimately the plaintiff, Mr R. D. Tata, lost his suit, partly on technical grounds, but also because the High Court held there had been no precedent, since the Parsi settled in India, for an alien's initiation. The children of the marriage, it was ruled, might be admitted, but not Mrs Tata herself,

The Reformers pleaded vainly that there was presumptive evidence of proselytizing a century ago, and they cited *Rivayats*, opinions of Dasturs in Persia given in response to appeals from India. These were dismissed as having no authority. The great question is before the Courts again at the present time, on what is called the Rangoon case. Both parties have made enormous efforts. A commission has sat in Bombay to collect sworn evidence. One distinguished Parsi was under examination for thirty hours.

It will be worth while to set down the issues as they appeal to the two sides which are fighting so determinedly on a matter both regard as vital. Impartiality is easy, for neither side stands on ground the non-Parsi wants to occupy. The Reformer is never found taking a missionary standpoint; the Orthodox is interested only in caste privileges. The latter, who form at present a large majority, are afraid that if the door were once thrown open there would be a great influx of undesirables. A French lady of refinement, marrying into one of the millionaire families of Bombay—that is one thing. But what if her admission brought in a crowd of sweepers, greedily eyeing the splendid charities available for Parsis through the generosity of the past? Against this it is urged with force that the community is very small, and has a diminishing birth-rate: moreover the death-rate of infants, in spite of the very high average prosperity of the Parsis, is actually one per cent. worse than the average for the total population of Bombay. Clearly, unless some new blood is brought in there will be no Parsis to divide the charities in the course of a few generations. A community living almost entirely in cities, and occupied in sedentary pursuits, has small chance of being physically robust under the conditions of India. And meanwhile, with the overcrowding of the few professions to which Parsis are attracted, marriage tends to be later and later, and the size of families correspondingly reduced. If the Parsis are not to become a negligible handful, clearly they must either bring in new blood or revolutionize

the conditions of their community life. Which course they should take is not for an outsider to suggest. But we may all earnestly hope that the question will be rescued from the category of party contentions, and studied afresh in a spirit of mutual tolerance and with a single eye to the welfare of all.

# CHAPTER 2

## THE PRIESTHOOD

Without a Magian it is not lawful for a Persian to offer sacrifices.
HERODOTUS.

THE Magian priesthood, which as early as Herodotus had become indispensable for the external side of Persian religion, is still firmly entrenched in the same position. The priests of the Fire-temples are called Mobeds, and the name[1] implies descent from the ancient tribe which has so profoundly influenced the history of Zoroastrianism from the time of its first emergence into history after the blank period that followed the Prophet's own age. Like the priesthood of ancient Israel, or that of modern Hinduism, the office is strictly hereditary. The son of a priest is not obliged to take up the profession: in these days it has small attraction for young men of ability and ambition, and a large proportion of priests' sons abandon it for secular callings that are more lucrative and more respected. Some reasons for the scanty honour that the priest receives will come out as we proceed. Occasionally we see a layman wearing the white turban distinctive of the priests, but without the white dress that they always wear. This indicates at once his descent and his abandonment of the profession. While the hereditary caste thus loses large numbers of those who are born into it, it cannot be recruited from outside. The reduction is no inconvenience at present, the less so as it gives the priests who do practise a better chance of a living wage. But if it goes on very much further, it is likely to

[1] It would be *Mogupaiti* in Avestan, 'lord of Magi'.

make some difference to the religious customs of the Parsis, unless indeed — which is all too likely — their own total diminishes *pari passu*.

Before the organization of the priesthood can be described, it will be necessary to explain the division of the Parsis into sects. There is a schism among them, affecting practically nothing but details of ceremonial, which dates from June 6, 1745. As in a famous episode of early Christian history, the original dispute concerned the calendar: it is too obvious a deduction from experience in the annals of religion that a sharp division can always be reckoned on if only a sufficiently trivial point of difference can be found. The bulk of the Parsis observed *Naoroz*, or New Year's Day, on Monday, September 11, 1916. A much smaller section observed it on Saturday, August 12. These dates represent what the vernal equinox has come to by neglecting the calendar for some centuries. The year has always been one of twelve months of thirty days each, and five 'Gatha days' added at the end. Naoroz accordingly arrives a day too soon when four years are complete—apart from the small correction by which we drop three leap years in four centuries. A simple sum shows that the necessary intercalation has been dropped for nearly nine hundred years by the September party and for a thousand years by the August. The history of the difference of practice does not concern us. Enough to state the August party adopts the title *Kadmi* (*Kadimi*), 'ancient,' one of those question-begging designations which are not unknown in Western ecclesiastical history. The Septembrites are *Shenshahis*, or 'royal', as they claim to perpetuate the practice of the Zoroastrian kings of Persia. There is a rather half-hearted movement now towards accommodating the solar calendar to the sun, from which it is clear both sects dissent rather seriously. Since both parties are in the wrong, and since the difference between them is the outcome of a piece of negligence which each fell into many centuries ago, the reform should be easy were it not for the

unreasoning conservatism which all the world over exerts so much influence upon religion. There is even a precedent for reconciliation which might claim very special authority. To quote the naïvely unconscious language of the *Gazetteer*:

> In Persia the error remained uncorrected till about A.D. 1075. Jalal-ud-din Malik Shah (A.D. 1074–92), king of Persia, ordered that a day should be added to the year whenever it was necessary in order to make the new year fall on the day the sun passed the same point of the ecliptic. He appointed Umar Cheyam, an astronomer, to make a calendar. The corrected year is called the Malikahahi year, and this is still the Persian revenue year.

It is a curious coincidence that names so famous as those of Omar Khayyám and Julius Caesar should be connected in East and West respectively with the assimilation of the calendar to the sun.

At the head of the Zoroastrian priesthood stand the *Dasturs* or high priests.[1] They may be recognized by the beautiful stoles[2] which hang to the feet over their priestly white robes. Their office is normally hereditary, passing to the eldest son. Dr M. N. Dhalla, the learned Dastur of Karachi, is an exception to this rule. In Bombay there are two Dasturs of the Shenshahi sect, and one of the Kadmi. The duplication is the perpetuation of accidental conditions of the past, connected with the comparatively recent influx of the mofussil Parsis into Bombay. Indeed, the Kadmis have really two lines of high priesthood; but about twenty years ago the representative of one line was deposed on the ground of a breach of law for celebrating a marriage between parties precluded by consanguinity, of which he declared he was unaware. The vacancy was filled some fifteen years later by the choice of a respected Mobed of good position. But meanwhile the

[1] N.P. *dastawar*; Gathic *dastvā* 'dogma'. The position of the Dastur answers fairly to that implied by the Avestan term *Zaraθuštrotəmo*, a superlative adjective formed from the Prophet's name. See p. 198.

[2] *Stole* is used to show how it is usually worn. But this shawl is sometimes carried on the arm. It is sometimes complimentary, not official: I was myself ceremonially invested with one in Karachi.

Dastur in the other line had died, and there was no heir. The Kadmis have not yet found a successor who will act, although they have applied to learned priests of the other sect. Every great Fire-temple[1] has at present a Dastur in charge, and the larger settlements of Parsis, such as those at Udwada, Naosari, Surat, Poona, Karachi, have Dasturs—in the case of Surat one for each sect. The Irani sect, consisting of Parsis who have come from Persia in modern times, have no Dastur of their own, but the officiating Mobed of a particular temple which they frequent acts in this capacity. Dasturs are naturally the referees in questions of doctrine and ceremonial, and there is accordingly a wish that they should be learned men. Some of them are. There is Shams-ul-Ulama Darab Peshotan Sanjana, of Bombay, who has taken up his father's task of editing the *Dinkard*, an immense Pahlavi treatise preserving in epitome large masses of lost Avestan matter. And there is Dr M. N. Dhalla of Karachi, who stands alone in possessing a Western scientific training, which he received under Professor A. V. Williams Jackson of New York, the greatest authority on Iranian subjects in the English-speaking world. We name only those who have evidenced their learning in published work.

It has been already indicated that the priesthood is hereditary. In fact, if the genealogies could be trusted, all priests except those of Cambay belong not merely to the ancient Magian tribe but to a single family of twelve centuries' antiquity. The Aaron of this family was named Shapur Sheheriar, and he was among the earliest Parsi settlers in India. His grandson Neriosengh translated the Avesta, as traditionally understood, into Sanskrit: his rendering is among our indispensable authorities to-day. Unfortunately the inclusion of this famous name only avails to wreck the whole scheme, for Neriosengh flourished some four centuries after the supposed epoch of Shapur !

The women of priestly descent, who have reserved to them

[1] *Atesh Behram*: see next chapter, p. 142.

the privilege of spinning and weaving the *kusti* or sacred thread, till lately were only married to priests. Like the Magi of two thousand years ago as described by Diogenes Laertius, the practising priests of to-day wear white robes, and white turbans. They also must keep the face unshaved. To shave the head or face, and to wear colours, are the outward and visible sign of abandoning the priestly calling.

When for three generations a family has abstained from qualifying for the priesthood, and worn lay dress, they cease to be eligible: a would-be priest must be at least the great-grandson of a practising priest. Some very outstanding Parsis, such as the late Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the late Mr Dadabhai Naoroji, and the Tata family, have had priestly blood but have not exercised their privilege.

The initiation of a priest begins with his admission as *Herbad* or *Ervad*,[1] which for the great majority is the only step ever attained. Only a few take the special qualification required for service in the Fire-temple and the performance of the greater ceremonies. An Ervad may even pass direct from that rank to that of Dastur, without ever qualifying as a Mobed. 'Ervad' is often used even by non-practising priests, with connotation much like that of an academic title.

It is needless, for the purpose of this book, to spend any space on the ritual of initiation. The exposition of ritual is best left to those for whom ritual means something. It is possible, however, to appreciate the original purpose of the austerities that form a necessary part of the initiation. Fasting, strict chastity, and much meditation are prescribed. But in these days the practice is to undergo the ceremony in early youth, and it has therefore lost much of its original significance.

The central rite is that called the *barashnum*, which a Nāvar or Ervad does not repeat, and even a Dastur does not undergo. A Mobed, however, whose work is in the Fire-

[1] Avestan *aeθrapaiti*, 'master of (priestly) pupils,' or as usually taken 'master of learning'.

temple and the performance of the inner ceremonies, has to take it often. With its nine days' tedium he must atone for a journey by rail or by sea, or even the falling off of his turban. Its details will be found in the Vendidad, set forth with the usual meticulous detail.

The expenses of initiation are often borne by some pious donor, who will give Rs 500 to 1000 for the purpose. Often he is the layman whose family priest's son is to be initiated. The boy is then called his *Nāvar* or Ervad.

If the young Ervad wishes to go on to the status of a full Mobed, which he may do before he is twenty, he must complete the learning of the whole Yasna. He is spared the Vendidad, which is indeed taken right through at the *Nirang* ceremony—it lasts from midnight till about 8 a.m.—but is read from the book. A Mobed will have by heart perhaps a full half of the extant Avesta. But he actually learns it all without understanding a word of it, in the great majority of cases. On one occasion the writer saw a ceremony, known as the Yasna rite, obligingly performed for his benefit by two Mobeds. As a feat of memory it was really extraordinary. This was one of the shortest ceremonies, but it lasted a full hour, and involved the continuous performance of manual acts and repetition of formulae, which had to follow prescribed order exactly. To the spectator's astonishment, it proved that the officiating Mobed did not know Avestan, and could not even recognize a word from the *Ashem Vohu* when adapted for complimentary address. All this is therefore memory work, divorced from the slightest trace of intelligence. One can realize how galling such ignorance is to keen witted, well-educated laymen, who feel themselves dependent on the ministrations of a man who lets himself do what a gramophone might do better.

To make the matter worse, the general education of priests is on a low level. There are even three or four Dasturs who cannot speak or understand English, and large numbers of Mobeds. When we compare the very high standard prevailing

among Parsi laymen in this respect, the backwardness of the priests becomes very conspicuous. There are of course some learned priests; and even among those who perform without understanding the rites which make the sole demand on their mental equipment, there are doubtless some for whom the ancestral ceremonies have a real sacramental significance even when conducted in an unknown tongue. But it is a fact keenly deplored by Parsis that there is no response to efforts made for raising the level of sacerdotal intelligence. Two 'Madressas' exist in Bombay, institutions founded expressly for the priesthood, that they might learn the Avestan and Pahlavi languages and study the texts they have to recite. One of them is under the guidance of the learned Dastur Darab Peshotan Sanjana, already named. The Madressas train a fair number of young Parsis for the degree examination in Avestan and Pahlavi as 'second language' (to English). But they attract very few priests. As a class, these are content to repeat their text and perform their ritual and pocket their pence for the same. No teaching, except the passing on of a rote-knowledge like their own, is expected of them. No wonder that the priests themselves feel the career is not worth pursuing, and put their clever sons into other callings. It is very obvious, however, that when worship is almost entirely in the hands of a class that is shut up to mechanical functions, the community is bound to suffer. We may point out further that the neglect of so many priests to study their sacred texts intelligently is emphatically rebuked by the Vendidad itself, which sets a higher ideal. The picture of the priest sitting up far into the night studying 'Holy Wisdom'[1] is surely not satisfied by a rote-learning of texts in an unknown tongue.

The facts just sketched have a bearing on conditions widely prevalent in the East. The bane of Indian education is the immense difficulty of emancipating it from the habit of learning by rote. To burden with matter unrelated to intelligence

[1] See the passage in *E. R. P. P.*, p. 157 (Vend. 18).

a faculty of memory all too ready to accept the burden, is a procedure likely to afflict with atrophy the reasoning powers of men. One recalls the immortal lines about the diligent examinees who

> wrote, and wrote, and wrote;
> But though they wrote it all by rote,
> They didn't write it right.

It is always so, for even when they write it correctly they cannot 'write it *right*'! Rote-knowledge is really no knowledge at all: it is absolutely undigested mental food. And the prominence given to it in connexion with religion links itself at once with another feature we shall have to examine later. Words which are repeated so often in worship, with the belief that their right recitation is of high religious importance, soon become what in Hinduism is called *mantram*. The consequences of correctly repeating the Ahuna Vairya of the Ashem Vohu are beyond all powers of reason to justify. So theosophy steps in, and the religion is infected with a wholly alien neo-Gnosticism. But that subject must be deferred.

An important function of the ancient priesthood has been in complete abeyance since the Parsi community became closed. In the olden times there were itinerant priests who went from place to place preaching. They are mentioned as early as the Gatha of the Seven Has[1]; and it is clear that they owed their origin to the propagandism of the first and most virile period of Zoroastrianism.

The priests of the Irani community are distinguished in certain small features from those of the Parsis in general. They wear white turbans of a distinct form. The ceremonies which they have to conduct differ in some respects from those of other Parsis: the very curious and interesting marriage ritual, in particular, is quite distinct.

The daily work of the Parsi priests will come into view as we describe the ceremonial, for nearly all of which he is

[1] See above, p. 55.

indispensable. An approximate estimate of the number of practising priests may be added in closing this chapter. The figures apply to Bombay alone. There are about 750 at present, but only about a fifth of them observe the very exacting *barashnum* qualification, which entitles them to officiate at the 'inner' liturgical services. The rest celebrate Naojote, marriage, and the lesser liturgies. Kadmi Mobeds account for about fifty of the total, including about twenty Iranis: all Irani Zoroastrians belong to the Kadmi sect. There are a good many Ervads who continue to wear the white turban, though engaged in secular pursuits. So long as they continue to wear it, they may take up the practice of the priesthood at any time, or even perform ceremonies, such as are open to their grade, without relinquishing their status as laymen. But if they lay aside the white turban, this is no longer open to them.

Lastly we should append a note as to the economic position of the priesthood. It is estimated that in Bombay a Dastur may receive between £200 and £300 a year, in mofussil towns much less. Priests of lower rank will have an income of £20 to £80. It is obvious that men are under no temptation to exercise the priesthood for its emoluments, and the intellectual and spiritual attractions are, as we have seen, no more considerable. We are not surprised that the profession has ceased to be an object of ambition.

# CHAPTER 3

## CEREMONIAL LIFE: FIRE-TEMPLES AND TOWERS OF SILENCE

There are also fire-temples, a peculiar sort of enclosure, in the midst of which is an altar, with abundance of ashes upon it, and the Magi guard thereon a fire that is never quenched.

They do not bury the Magi, but leave them to be devoured by birds.

STRABO.

IT has been already pointed out that modern Parsi religion is wrapped up in its ceremonial. It is stating a mere objective fact when we say that nearly all of the religious observance of every Parsi lies wholly outside the Gathas and their outlook.[1] We are not urging that there is any irreconcilable divergence: the Gathas and the ceremonial are accepted together, and there is no consciousness of any incongruity. But those who find the ceremonial religiously satisfying must admit that it forms no part of the teaching of Zarathushtra. That is of course no *ipso facto* condemnation of it: Zarathushtra may remain the highest authority for the Parsi, and yet have had successors endowed with his spirit. How far the later religion answers this requirement we will ask presently.

Two buildings are required as soon as a Parsi community of sufficient size is established in any new place—a Fire-temple for the living, and a Tower of Silence for the dead. Let us begin with these, and first with the temple, served by the priests of the higher order, the Mobeds, described in the preceding chapter.

[1] Compare a letter in the *Times of India*, May 6, 1915, by Mr M. P. Khareghat, late I.C.S., who speaks of 'the religion of the Later Avesta, which constitutes the greater part of the religion of the present day'.

There are three kinds of Fire-temple. The specially holy place is called an *Ātesh Behrām*, a name which combines those of the Avestan Yazads Fire and Victory (*Ātar*, *Vərəθrayna*). The Indian name *Agiāri* (cf. Vedic *Agni* = *ignis*) is a general term usually applied to both the other kinds, *Ātesh Ādarān* and *Ātesh Dādgāh*. The difference lies, as we shall see, in the amount of purification the Fire has undergone. A native Iranian name is also used, *Dar-i-Mihr*, or 'Gate of Mithra'. The buildings, which are often not easily distinguishable from an ordinary dwelling-house, are studiously plain and unpretentious: one almost suspects that they eschew ornament of set purpose. All is concentrated on the Fire. The writer can describe this from a dummy that was placed in the centre when a replica of the *Yasna* ceremony was performed for him, as already recorded. There is an urn about two feet high, shaped like a tea-urn with the lid removed. It is filled with the compressed ash—sand took its place in the imitation rite—and on the top the fire burns, fed regularly with pieces of sandalwood, with which every worshipper is equipped. The urn is 'enthroned' upon a stone pedestal, four-sided, with a semicircle cut out of each side so as to make it stand on four broad rectangular feet at the corners. The sight of a photograph of this 'throne' proved very suggestive to Dr D. B. Spooner, who had dug up many of them in his famous excavations at Pataliputra: we have clearly to do with a very ancient Magian use. In the domed roof there is a bronze 'crown' directly above the fire.

It is the preparation of the Fire that makes the establishment of an Atesh Behram so costly. The fire has to be compounded of sixteen different fires, all purified after a long and complicated ritual. One of them is the fire from the burning of a corpse, which for a Parsi mind is the last indignity that can be offered to their sacramental element. A number of sandalwood logs are kindled from the cremation. Then above the flame, a little too high to touch it, a metal spoon is held, with small holes in it, containing chips of sandalwood.

When these ignite, the flame is made to kindle a fresh fire. This process is repeated ninety-one times, to the accompaniment of recited prayers. The purified fire is set aside in an urn, and of course kept burning with special care. The idea underlying this at first sight seems clear: the sacred element has been forced into contact with what is most unclean, and it must be rescued from the pollution. Why $7 \times 13$ cleansings achieve this is not apparent, except as to the first of the two factors. There might seem to be indeed a second difficulty from the Parsi point of view. The corpse is *ex hypothesi* that of an unbeliever, since even advanced reformers among the Parsis have as yet got no further than signing memorials in favour of cremation. Now it is distinctly laid down that the corpse of a *daevayasna* is not impure: in this case the living body was impure, and death purges it. Perhaps the problem is eased by being complicated, for we find presently that the fire kindled by lightning—the securing of which is one of the practical difficulties in the path of those who would consecrate an Atesh Behram—needs ninety purifications, though not the preliminary kindling of sandalwood logs that is peculiar to the corpse-fire. Since the fire that comes pure from heaven itself needs twenty-nine more cleansings than that from a distillery or an idol temple, and that again which comes from striking flint or rubbing—the most universally sanctified methods of making a fire—actually needs 144 repetitions of the process, it may not unreasonably be inferred that our modern powers of reason are unequal to the task of evaluating such symbolism. Christian contemporaries of early Sassanian Magi would probably have been ready to hazard confident guesses, had they met with a similar series of numbers in the Book of Leviticus. In these days the ingenious lore which found so much wisdom in ' fishes one hundred, and fifty and three ' has tamely lapsed into the Theory of Numbers, even as the casting of horoscopes has shrunk away from the coming of the astronomer.

It is easy to imagine how many priests are enabled to eat

of their bread by the sweat of their brow during the tedious weeks through which all this elaborate fire-fighting goes on. The concluding acts are simpler. On the first of the 'Gatha Days', the five days that complete the year when the twelve thirty-day months are over, the sixteen fires are brought together into one urn. Daily prayers are chanted over it through the first month of the new year. Then on a lucky day a procession of priests is formed, bearing maces and swords, emblems of the Yazad of Victory. Under a silver canopy the urn is borne in and set in its place in the inner room. A sword and two maces are hung over the walls, and at each corner there is a brass bell suspended from a chain, rung at each of the five watches (*gah*) when a ceremony is performed near the fire. The bell may be an item taken over from Hinduism, of which it is very characteristic, but the affiliation is not necessary.

The first Atesh Behram was at Sanjan. It has been removed four times—it is easy to remove a temple when the only thing that counts is the urn with the fire. Since 1742 it has been at Udwada in Gujarat. There is another at Naosari, two at Surat, and four in Bombay, two of which were consecrated by Kadmis and two by Shenshahis.

The building of an Atesh Adaran is a much simpler affair, as the fire only needs to be combined from four, taken from the houses of members of the four classes in the old Persian community.[1] Each of them, moreover, has only to be purified thrice. The Atesh Dadgah has an ordinary house-fire. Naturally these two kinds of temple are numerous. There are some forty of them in Bombay. Outside Gujarat and Kathiawar they are found in Aden, Ahmednagar, Belgaum, Calcutta, Igatpuri, Kalyan, Karachi (two), Lahore, Nagpur, Poona (three), Quetta, Secunderabad, Sholapur, and Zanzibar. This list is not exhaustive, but it will serve to indicate roughly the dispersion of the Parsi community.

[1] Theoretically: as these classes do not exist, they substitute other communities.

Religious Parsis visit the fire-temple almost daily, and on four days of each month, those sacred to Atar (3rd, 9th, 17th, and 20th), there is a very large attendance. There is no distinction between men and women in their form or place of worship. Arrived at the temple, the worshipper washes the uncovered parts, and recites the *Kusti* prayer.[1] Then he passes through the outer hall, goes barefoot through the inner hall to the threshold of the room where the Fire burns, and recites prayers standing. Only the priest is in the room itself. He receives from the worshipper sandalwood and a piece of money, and brings him ashes from the urn in a ladle, which he applies to his forehead and eyelashes. After his prayers he retires backwards to the place where he left his shoes, and goes home.

The nature of the prayers thus recited before the Fire is left to the worshipper. The Avestan prayers and the sacred formulae [2] may be supplemented with petitions in the worshipper's own language, and setting forth his own special desires. These may be for the highest spiritual blessings, or may be for wealth, position, or comfort, or for some very definite piece of pleasure or vanity. Neither type is peculiar to Parsi religion.

Reverence for fire is not confined to the Atesh Behram or the Agiari. The house-fire has also a sacred character: if *ātar* is really connected with the Latin *ātrium*, that was indeed the very beginning of the cultus. If a Parsi removes to another house within the same town, he takes his fire with him. If he is going further, he gives it to friends or relatives to mix with theirs.

A curious point arises on the question of reverence to Fire. What about smoking? If a priest is near the Fire, he wears a covering over his mouth, lest his breath pollute it. No Parsi may blow out a light. It would seem to follow that grievous desecration arises from such continuous contact of a fire with the breath as is involved in smoking. Casuistry, however, can

[1] See p. 163. [2] Above, pp. 42, 90 ff.

do great things when a strong predilection comes into conflict with ceremonial rules ; and smokers in other lands have shown that tobacco stimulates ingenuity in discovering excellent reasons to justify its use. One of the most distinguished of Parsi lawyers, a doughty fighter on the orthodox side, got through more than one cheroot during the call the writer had the privilege of making. The visitor was conscious of a strong desire to ask for a legal opinion on the subject, but departed without making the venture.

Devout Parsis are fond of dwelling on the religious ideas which the Fire brings to them by its manifold symbolism. Their reverence for the Sun is a cognate principle. At the daylight Gahs they turn to the Sun, and say the Nyayishes to him and Mithra. Even so Magi—though not Zoroastrian Magi—'worshipped the Sun towards the East' in Jerusalem in Ezekiel's day. It is, however, very misleading to use the word 'worship' to describe the attitude of Parsis towards their sacred symbol. If it is held to imply that they regard Fire as a deity, the term is wholly false, though there may be ignorant members of the community who misinterpret the reverence paid to it. Educated Parsis always protest vehemently that for them there is one God, and that reverence offered to angels and spirits, and to the sacramental element, is only a form of approach to the 'Wise Lord'. We have to put beside all this the adoration of other sacred elements. Visitors to Bombay notice crowds of Parsis at a favourite spot on the sea-shore, adoring the Waters before the Sun descends into the sea on his way to the new world. The link with the Sun here is accidental, apart from the requirement that such worship must be paid in daylight. The worshippers will often be there in early morning instead, when they would turn their backs on the Sun. The same prayer, the Ardvisur Nyayish, would be offered by the well outside the Fire-temple. These various acts of worship are specially associated with the name-month and name-day of the Yazad concerned.

It should be noted, before we pass away from the Fire-

temple, that Parsis manage to do without an Agiari even in places where there are a fair number of persons qualified to stand before the fire. In Colombo, for example, there are over a hundred adult males in the Parsi community, but no place of stated worship for them, although there must be three or four hundred presumably needing it. They meet sometimes in the house of a well-to-do member, where of course there will be a house-fire. There is at least one priest in the place. A Fire-temple would be more indispensable, according to our ideas, if it were a centre of instruction as well as of worship. But except in Karachi, where that daring reformer Dr Maneckji Dhalla has introduced a sermon into his Fire-temple, the practice is generally cold-shouldered, though one Dastur in Bombay generally gives a brief address on the anniversary of his Atesh Behram. India is not used to the institution, and its prominence in Christianity perhaps does not tend to recommend it. Otherwise the Parsis eschew the only clearly practicable means for supplying moral and religious instruction to their own people. Their great want of such instruction is very freely admitted by themselves.

From the Fire-temple we may pass to the other conspicuous sign of a Parsi community, the *Dakhma*, generally known as the Tower of Silence, where the vultures consume the corpse, as prescribed in the Vendidad, and practised by the Magi from the earliest period of our knowledge of them. As already explained, it was in the days of Herodotus only the Magi who employed this rite, which apparently horrified the Greeks almost as much as their hallowing the marriage of the next of kin: both alike were foreign to Persian religion, and especially to Zarathushtra. But while the second of the two never made its way into Parsi practice, or was regarded with anything but detestation, the institution of the Dakhma is exceedingly near to the heart of the Parsi. It is of course impossible in any but a few places where conditions are favourable, numbering perhaps some sixty in all. Where the community is small, as at Calcutta, and funerals therefore infrequent,

there is serious difficulty about the vultures. In many towns, even in India, the Parsis have burial-places of their own. This is actually the case in Matheran, a hill station from which Bombay is easily visible. But the Parsi defiles the sacred earth with the utmost reluctance, and still less will he pollute the fire. He regards it as a precious privilege that his body should be given to the vultures, and his bones mixed with those of other Parsis, rich and poor, in the receptacle in the well of the Tower in which they are united when dried by the sun. There is one among the seven Towers in the beautiful gardens on Malabar Hill, Bombay, which was built by M. J. Readymoney in 1786 for his own use. His body was kept in a stone enclosure for a month until it was ready. Not all Parsis are equally devoted to the practice: there has even been a small party which would like to permit cremation. As we have seen, advocates of burial could probably quote Zarathushtra himself.[1] The sentiment felt against the Tower by a few Parsis and by most outsiders is a matter of taste, and from our point of view mainly to be determined by sanitary considerations. Granted plenty of vultures, the corpse is disposed of with a minimum of danger or unpleasantness to the living, and more swiftly than even fire can do its work. To 'fools of habit' in the West

> sweeter seems
> To rest beneath the clover sod,
> That takes the sunshine and the rains,
> Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
> The chalice of the grapes of God.

But it is not difficult to understand a Parsi's recoil from the repulsiveness of that alternative to his own immemorial custom. From the least repulsive way of returning to its elements our cast-off tenement the Parsi is deterred by his reverence for the Fire. Rather inconsistently, he does not see that Fire is so victoriously pure that it will not admit pollution, but destroys

[1] See p. 41 f.

it. It would truly seem that the advocate of cremation is the better Parsi!

A Tower is a round structure of brick or stone situated on rising ground, a hill-top if possible. Inside its circular wall is a floor built in three sections—the highest, next the wall, for males, the next for females, the lowest for children. They slope down to a central well, with circumference about half that of the outside wall. In the shallow receptacles provided the corpse is laid, and the cotton clothes well slit up and down with scissors, care being taken that the head does not lie to the north, a quarter haunted by fiends. As soon as the corpse-bearers have left the Tower, the vultures swoop down from their post of observation round the wall, and in half an hour there is nothing left but the skeleton. Quickly the bones dry, and the corpse-bearers enter again after some days, and cast the bones into the central well, where they crumble away. They are, however, quite free from pollution, and could be buried without violating the sanctity of the earth. It should be noticed again that on the Magian theory it is only a Parsi corpse that is so exceedingly impure. It represents the victory of the corruption fiend (*Druj Nasu*) over that which conspicuously belongs to Ahura Mazdah's creation. An unbeliever is impure when alive, not when dead, and burial or even burning does not therefore pollute the elements. On the perhaps not real inconsistency in the symbolism here, see above (p. 143).

The account of the ceremony at the Tower may take the form of one specific experience of the writer's. It happened that the well-known publicist Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who was at the time Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University, died on the day we landed at Bombay. Next morning, by the kind arrangement of Dr Jivanji Modi, I was admitted through the gate over which is inscribed a warning that only Parsis may enter. Naturally a very large crowd attended to do honour to so distinguished a Parsi, and my first sight of the community surpassed anything that succeeded it in respect of

the numbers gathered. A procession of some 5,000 men followed the bier up to the gate, from which the Parsis alone walked up to the part of the gardens in front of the Tower. First came the corpse-bearers, six in number, each couple holding one end of a *paiwand*,[1] or cotton handkerchief, in his disengaged hand, linking him with his fellow. They were clad in white entirely, like the mourners, who likewise were linked with the paiwand, two and two. The body, covered with a white sheet, and dressed in white cotton clothes, was borne on a light iron bier, carried on the bearers' shoulders. A clear interval was left, and the priests and the mourners came up. Just in front of the Tower the bier was set down, the mourners filed past to look at the uncovered face, and then the bearers took it into the Tower. The clang of the iron gate as they came out marked the end of the ceremony. The mourners stood reciting prayers towards the Tower, for which prayer-books were provided. Then they dispersed, after ceremonial washing.

The gardens are visited in the morning and evening by the worshippers who wish to remember the Fravashis of the dead, especially on the days of the month sacred to them, and the month named after them. The concluding prayer as the mourners leave may be quoted. First in Pahlavi they say 'We repent of all our sins'. Then in Avestan 'Reverence to thee (the soul of the dead man). Here we adore the souls of the dead which are the Fravashis of the Righteous.' Note how the *urvan* and the *fravashis* are joined: the union took place at death, according to Pahlavi theology.[2]

We go back to describe earlier stages of the obsequies, here however without the advantage of personal observation. As elsewhere the details will be passed over, unless they appear to have real religious significance.

Modern Parsis are very fond of rationalizing the ceremonial, and pointing out how at every turn the rites protect

[1] Avestan *paitibanda*, from *band* 'to bind'.
[2] See below, p. 178.

the living from peril of contagion. That some of them may achieve that result *en passant* is undeniable, just as some of the regulations of the Levitical code worked in a sanitary direction. It is natural that a kind of instinct, coupled with the sense of disgust that the beginning of decay produces, should teach men in a relatively early stage of progress to avoid contact with a corpse, and to reduce its offensiveness as much as possible until they can dispose of it in the most effective way. The fact of contagion presents itself in the case of some diseases by the manifest results. But Magian practice does not include provisions for avoiding contagion from the living, or disinfecting its sources ; and of course it is only a minute proportion of deaths that arise from contagious diseases, except in time of epidemic. The very brief period allowed between death and funeral precludes real danger from the setting-in of decay. It is safer therefore to restrict ourselves to the obvious fact that in the earlier stages of human thought death is regarded as the work of a malignant spirit which has to be prevented in some way from harming the survivors. This conception lies palpably behind the Magian use from first to last. The few points in which the ritual arising from such a conviction does really produce results of sanitary value will naturally be observed by enlightened modernists for a reason very different from those which prompted them in the beginning. The retention of other ritual will depend on the extent to which it still satisfies religious feeling.

One other comment may be made upon the Magian funeral customs. There is no trace anywhere of that almost universal fear of the ghost, which has determined the usages of so many peoples, and left plentiful unrecognized survivals in our own. We still pull down blinds, little thinking of keeping the ghost away from the home he loved : we wear mourning, and thereby unknowingly disguise ourselves against a return of a dangerous spirit. And in Ireland there is still observed the 'wake', in which a hideous noise is made—even as in the

house of Jairus where Jesus rebuked it long ago—to scare away a presence that so lately was loved and loving. Christians who rebel against immemorial customs that have been so little touched by the bright spirit of Christianity, may be disposed to envy the Parsis their emancipation from the consequences of a prehistoric superstition. In their case the deliverance has come from the expulsive power of a very different fear. Impurity, real or imagined, is the key-note of every Magian rite of avoidance. And the impurity of death is the worst of all, the fiend who inflicts and strengthens himself by it the deadliest enemy. Hence the white clothes, so carefully washed, the fire that burns in the death chamber, the washings of the corpse, and the mourners, the use of *gomez*, and the rest. It is hard to repress a smile when we are told that *gomez* (bull's urine) 'is believed to possess some disinfecting properties'.[1]

Very probably some such idea underlies the curious ritual of the *Sag-dīd*, or 'glance of the dog'. It has to be 'four-eyed', and this requirement descends from Indo-Iranian antiquity, for the epithet is connected with the dogs of Yama in the Veda. Dogs are not normally provided by nature with this qualification; but it is held to be satisfied by 'a dog with two eye-like spots just above the two eyes'. If a Vedic passage is to determine the original meaning, the *Sag* should represent the watchful guardian of the realms into which the dead man's soul is going. The Magian adaptation will point to the exorcising of a fiend who wishes ill to him on his journey. That this can be done by the power of the eye may be illustrated by the opposite conception of

[1] A distinguished chemist thus answers my query on this point: 'Urine is a medium in which a certain type of bacteria grow remarkably well, producing strong fermentations and consequently, in a general sense, is devoid of disinfecting properties. On the other hand, the bacteria which thus thrive in urine are, in general, very specialized, and probably by their vigorous growth would inhibit the multiplication of most disease germs, so that in a very restricted sense it is possible to use the description. This, however, so far as everyday affairs go, is more or less a quibble and would make me look upon it as a mere excuse offered on behalf of a custom which raises a feeling of disgust in European minds.'

the 'evil eye' that can bewitch. Clearly it ought to be possible for the eye of a creature of the Good Creation to master things evil, as the steady gaze of a man will cow a wild beast. No such idea, of course, is present in the mind of the modern Parsi, or for the matter of that was present in the mind of the Median originals of Tobit and Tobias[1] when they went forth to deal kindly by the corpses of the faithful, and took their harmless, necessary dog with them. It is the business of such 'survivals' (*superstitiones*) to survive, not to perpetuate the explanation which would destroy their chance of life in more illuminated ages.

Conspicuous among the necessary agents in the due disposal of a corpse are the *Nasāsālārs* or corpse-bearers. They are professionals, who make their living at the cost of the perpetual impurity which makes them a class apart from other men. They have to mitigate the impurity by frequent ablutions, but to make them capable of attending an Atesh Behram would demand nothing less than a *barashnum* purification. They act in pairs, linked with *paiwand*, in accordance with the Vendidad regulation which makes it mortal sin for an individual without companion to come into the presence of death. It may be presumed that the association of two persons gives them a chance of surviving the attack of the fiend. The Greek proverb says 'against two not even Heracles avails': *a fortiori* therefore not the grisly phantom whom the Heracles of Euripides overcame. The Nasasalars have to be familiar with certain sacred formulae. They perform the *kusti* ceremony before they come to their work, and when they bring the bier into the death-chamber they recite the *Sraosh-baj* prayer half-way, finishing it at a later period. Sraosha is especially connected with the guidance of the dead, a kind of Parsi Hermes ψυχοπομπός. They next repeat an interesting formula, declaring in Persian that they do their duty 'according to the dictates of Ahura Mazdah, of the Ameshaspands, of the holy Sraosha, of Aderbad Marespand,

[1] See *E. Z.*, pp. 332 ff.

of the Dastur of the age'. The perpetuation of the name of the great reformer of the Sassanian age, the second founder of Parsi religion, is suggestive, as is the absence of the name of Zarathushtra, who certainly knew nothing of funeral rites like these. The formula is repeated 'in *bāj*', which is a manner of utterance with closed lips, producing a very curious effect. The writer can witness that it comes much more easily to the priests than he could have imagined possible: it is used for directions and extraneous matter in the performance of a ceremony, and it is averred that they can always make themselves understood.

An interesting detail is the drawing of a *kasha* three times round the place where the corpse is laid. A *kasha* (Avestan *karša*, Greek *τέλσον*) is a 'furrow', and it is drawn with a piece of metal. It marks off the ground and interposes a barrier against the excursions of the fiend into the places around. Dr Modi compares it with the boundary lines of the Roman *lustrum*.[1] To compare it with drawing a cordon round an infected district is less happy: they would be feeble germs that found difficulty in crossing a *kasha*!

At this point the priests come in, two of them reciting the first Gatha, holding a *paiwand*, and putting a *padan* over their face. This is a cotton cloth tied over nose and mouth. Used when they sit before the Fire, it guards the sacred element from the pollution of their breath: on this occasion it will protect them from the polluting elements that are in the air where a corpse lies.

The family that has been bereaved abstains from meat for three days, and lives on vegetables and fish. Were it not for the fish, there would be an obvious explanation, in that when the fiend of death has achieved a triumph, it is not allowed that he should add animals to his victims. It is quite conceivable that the difference may be a piece of make-believe. The fisherman does not kill the fish, as the butcher kills. He only takes them out of the water, and the ritual faster may

[1] *Anthropological Papers* (Bombay, 1912), pp. 330 ff.

eat that which has died of itself! In those Christian bodies that lay stress upon fasting there is a similar differentiation made in favour of fish.

The beliefs of the Parsis concerning the destiny of the soul have been explained already from the Avesta. It will only be necessary now to point out some parts of the ritual which concern these beliefs. First and most important are those which come before death. Great stress is laid on the dying person's participation in the *Patet* or confession,[1] which is made for him by two or more priests at the bedside. If he can say it alone, it is better. The prayer is a long one, in Avestan and Pazend.[2] It praises Asha, confesses sin, and promises amendment. Three extracts will indicate its character: [3]

> In your presence, ye good men (that have assembled here), I repent from all sins, of all bad thoughts, all bad words, all bad deeds, which I may have thought (said or done) in this world. O God, I repent, with my thought, word and deed, from all sins, physical or mental (i.e. committed through senses or mind), worldly or spiritual.
>
> * * * * * * * *
>
> I ought to have thought, I ought to have spoken, I ought to have acted according to the Will of God, but I did not think, speak or act thus. So I repent of all these sins with all my thought, words and deeds, physical or mental, worldly or spiritual.
>
> * * * * * * * *
>
> I praise with my thought, word and deed, all good thoughts, good word and good deeds. I entertain all good thoughts, good words and good deeds. I shun all evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds. Ye Amesha Spentas, I offer to you Homage and Worship, the very life of my body with all my thoughts, words and deeds, with all my heart. I praise righteousness (Asha).

If the dying man can say no more, he says an *Ashem Vohu*: an Avesta fragment (*Hadhokht Nask*) declares the repeating

[1] Avestan *paitiți*, 'return,' a fair equivalent for 'repentance', which, like the Iranian word, concentrates on the practical reformation, not on the sorrow accessory to it.

[2] Pazend is Pahlavi with its Semitic words replaced by Aryan.

[3] I owe these to the kindness of Dr Modi. He refers me to a translation of the whole Patet in Spiegel's Avesta (Spiegel-Bleeck iii. 153 ff.).

of an *Ashem* just before death to be worth a whole country. Its probable translation has been given above (p. 90): for the modern Parsi it is a solemn declaration that Right (Asha) is the highest good. It may perhaps be assumed that Parsis know this much about its meaning, though so few understand the Avestan words. Indeed, the current translations of these very obscure old formulae are decidedly imperfect; for our present purpose it is more important to note the erroneous modern understanding than the scientifically restored meaning of the original.

For the first three days after death the relatives are repeating prayers for the benefit of the deceased. They are addressed to Sraosha, under whose care he is. Dr Modi couples with this the use of the Sraosha Yasht (*Ys.* 57) as an evening prayer: the guardian of the soul in death is naturally thought of as caring for the soul of the living in sleep. The prayers are said at the beginning of the *Gahs*, the five religious divisions of the day, which start respectively at dawn, noon, 3 p.m., sunset, and midnight.[1] Since this last watch precedes the crucial fourth dawn, when the soul's destiny is to be formally determined, it is then that a special ceremony is performed in honour of Sraosha, beseeching the Yazad's protection for the dead. The Patet is used with reference to him as a confession and a prayer for forgiveness. A special ceremony, performed in the third (*Uzairina*) Gah of the third day, is the occasion of the announcement of donations to charitable funds in memory of the deceased. Dr Modi states that in five years (1884–9) more than twenty lakhs (say £140,000) were announced in this way. If the deceased was an outstanding public benefactor, a proposal is made that his name should be commemorated in the religious ceremonies of the local community, or if his activities have been more extensive, in those of the Parsis everywhere. The same assembly is the opportunity of announcing the adoption

[1] Named in Avestan respectively *Hāvan*, *Rapiθwin*, *Uzairina*, *Aiwisruθrəm*, *Ušahin*.

of a son for the deceased, if an adult who has left no son. The adopted son usually is a near relative.

The dawn of the fourth day being the time when the soul takes its flight to its permanent abode, there are solemn prayers offered for mercy upon him in the hour of the judgement at the 'Bridge of the Separator'. The ceremonies are successively in honour of Mithra's assessors at the Bridge, Rashnu and Arshtat, of Rama Khvastra, genius of the upper air, of the Fravashis, and lastly of Sraosha, whose help is implored thus for the soul in its journey of the hour. During the rite in honour of the Fravashis a new suit of white clothes is laid before the priest, in accordance with the words of the Fravashis in their Yasht, calling for worship by one 'with clothes in his hands' (*zasta vastravasa*). It seems to correspond to the 'All Souls' ritual of the ten days that close and open the year when food is offered to the Fravashis, as in a similar use in many other religions: it recalls the 'unclothed' condition of the disembodied soul.

Commemorative services are held likewise on the tenth and thirtieth day, and on the anniversary, marked by gifts of food and clothing to the poor, and prayers for the felicity of the soul.[1]

Here, however, we enter on a field of acute controversy. That prayer can benefit the soul during the first three days, when judgement is not yet passed, is allowed by all. But what about the prayers of later date? Reformers insist that they are simply invocations of the Fravashi, who cannot help the living unless properly invoked. The learned among the orthodox practically take the same line, when they set forth their beliefs in statements addressed to the outsider. But acute Parsi observers declare that this does not represent the mind of the people as a whole. If these rites are merely com-

[1] For a full and authoritative account of the funeral ceremonies of the Parsis, reference may be made to the pamphlet with this title by Dr Jivanji Modi (2nd edition, Bombay, 1905). Dr Modi has expounded these and other rituals in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.

memorative, why is so much stress laid on them? Why does a man beggar himself in life to secure mere commemoration after death, with no assurance of advantage from it? And why did impartial British judges, when such a bequest was contested before them, imply by their decision that the money was really left for 'masses' for the testator's own soul, and was therefore an invalid legacy according to public policy and the laws governing charitable trusts? Was the High Court really induced to accept a view of these bequests which 'only a few illiterates' hold?

The orthodox majority appealed to the then Viceroy, Lord Elgin, urging him to initiate legislation regularizing the trusts. It is not hard to see why their carefully drawn document did not carry conviction. One of the two scriptural passages cited [1] only concerns prayers during the first three nights, and is therefore irrelevant. All the weight accordingly lies on the extracts from the Farvardin Yasht,[2] which tell us that the Fravashis appeal to the living for praise, sacrifice, meditation, and blessing.[3] The petitioners sum up thus:

> The *Bājrojgār* ceremonies are meant to preserve a pious remembrance of the dead, to give an expression to the love, affection and gratitude of the living toward the dead, and their respect and regard for the dead, and thereby to please them and obtain for the living the benefit of their good offices and guidance. Zoroastrians firmly believe that the performance of these ceremonies not only pleases the *Frohars* or the spirits of the deceased whose deaths are the occasions of the performance of the ceremonies, but also benefits the whole of the living creation.

This then is the official orthodox view. In spite of it, Government apparently held that such legislation would have

[1] Dadistan, in West's version, *S. B. E.* xviii. 26–8.

[2] *Yt.* $13^{59-52, 156\,f.}$, Darmesteter's version.

[3] The memorial quotes the text thus: 'Who will receive us with meat and clothes in his hands (to be given in alms to poor Mazdayasnians)?' The bracketed gloss represents modern usage, but the idea in the Yasht, as we have seen (pp. 101 ff.), was very different. Albiruni and even modern Rivayats retain the pre-Zoroastrian idea of souls returning in quest of food and warmth: see *E. Z.* p. 261. The gloss reminds us of that incorporated in the Mosaic legislation, by which the primaeval use concerning the Last Sheaf becomes a provision for the poor.

been an innovation, only justifiable at the call of a unanimous community. If a case had been proved that the services were commemorative only, and were believed to benefit the living, not the dead, it is hard to see why the prayed relief was not at once granted.

The upholders of the trusts got their way in the end. First, they took to leaving their money to a particular Atesh Behram in Bombay, where the performance of the ceremonies was assured. Then the matter reverted to the Courts, and an orthodox Parsi judge reversed the previous decision. It was a piquant fact that this judge, Sir Dinshaw Davar (pronounced *Dower*), had been some years before in his private capacity a stout opponent of the trusts.

To the question of prayers for the dead, offered after the three days are past, we shall return. Here it is enough to record the disapproval of official orthodoxy, with the caveat that it appears to be a practice very deeply rooted in the Parsi community.

# CHAPTER 4

## CEREMONIAL LIFE: OUTSIDE THE FIRE-TEMPLE

Whether ye eat or drink or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God. —PAUL.

IT will be convenient to detach for separate treatment religious observances which are independent of the holy places that are the scene of the rituals described in Chapter 3, and capable of performance either without a priest or with a priest not observing the Barashnum. We will follow the Parsi's ceremonial life from its beginning at initiation, through the ordinary observances, and special religious events, by way of preparing for an account of the divisions in the community, and a general estimate of the religion as a whole.

The religious life of a Parsi begins with the *Naojote* or initiation ceremony. The name (compare Avestan *nava*, 'new,' and *zaotar*, 'priest, invoker') describes an induction of a 'novice'. The ceremony takes place after a boy or a girl is seven, with fifteen as an extreme limit. It is the ceremony of putting on the sacred cord (*kusti*) and shirt (*sudrah*), with the wearing of which a Parsi begins to follow the religion. The prayers involved are fundamental from the great frequency with which they are repeated by every Parsi throughout life. A full description will therefore be desirable.[1]

A Naojote is often performed, as in the case of one seen by the writer, in an assembly-room adjoining a Fire-temple, so that the family priest may take the child when initiated to do

[1] Depending as before on Dr Jivanji Modi. See his *Navjote Ceremony of the Parsees*, 2nd ed., Bombay, 1914.

reverence before the Fire. But it is only a convenience, and the child's home is more often the scene. A bath (*nāu*) is the natural preliminary, from which the parents and friends repair with the priest or priests and the child to the place of the ceremony. A new set of clothes, as well as a new *sudrah* and *kusti*, are set before the priest. There is at least one lamp, burning ghee, and fire on a censer with sandalwood and frankincense. The former, like the trayful of symbolic gifts of good luck given to the child afterwards, is an accessory due to the Indian environment.

The fact that the sacred girdle is as conspicuous in Hinduism and Buddhism as in Parsi religion suggests that it is an institution of Indo-Iranian antiquity. Its Avestan name is *aiwiyaonghana*, from *yāh*, 'to gird'. The regulations for its manufacture, which is a prerogative of women of priestly family, are very minute, and every detail is a most excellent mystery, into which we will not attempt to enter. Thus its seventy-two threads of lamb's wool represent the seventy-two Has of the Yasna.

> The hollow of the thread symbolizes the space between the earth and the heaven, between this world and the next. The doubling or the twisting of the thread in the beginning symbolizes the connexion between the present corporeal world and the future spiritual world. The two worlds are so connected that what you will sow in this world you will reap in the other. The turning of the *kusti* inside out has a somewhat similar signification. It symbolizes the passage of the soul from this corporeal to that spiritual world.[1]

This will serve as a fair sample of the ingenuities with which the mediaeval Parsi Fathers busied their brains. How far they are present to the modern Parsi as he winds and unwinds his kusti several times a day is beyond our power to say.

Before investiture the priest recites the Patet, and the child says it also if he knows it: if not, he repeats the *Honover* several times. Then both of them stand up, and the priest bids the child repeat a creed as follows: it must be observed

[1] Modi, op. cit., p. 14.

that it is in an unknown tongue, and there is no guarantee that the child will know in the least what it means. It is given thus by Dr Modi:

> Praised be the most righteous, the wisest, the most holy and the best Mazdayasnian Law, which is the gift of Mazda. The good, true, and perfect religion, which God has sent to this world, is that which Prophet Zoroaster has brought in here. That religion is the religion of Zoroaster, the religion of Ahura Mazda communicated to holy Zoroaster.
>
> Righteousness is the best gift and happiness. Happiness to him who is righteous for the (sake of) the best righteousness.

The comparison of the *Ashem Vohu* as given above here with the more exact rendering on p. 90 above will illustrate the fact that the archaic formulae are not infallibly interpreted. But our purpose now is only to ask what the modern Parsi thinks the old words mean, when he knows any more than the bare syllables learnt by rote.

With this creed repeated, the priest recites the Honover and invests the child with the *sudrah*. This is of white cambric made in two pieces, the seams being under the arms. The front half, we are told, symbolizes the past, and the back the future, which are related to each other through the present, presumably represented by the seams. Parsis are accordingly taught to turn their back on the Future! Possibly, however, the queer symbolism of these Pahlavi doctors does not loom very large in the mind of the Parsis, as he puts on his *sudrah* again after a bath—the only occasion on which he may discard it. The most important part of the *sudrah* is said to be a bag or purse placed in the middle just below the throat. It has two names, one which is accounted to signify faith in the religion, the other ('purse of righteousness') 'that a man has to be industrious, and has not only to fill his bag or purse with money, but has to fill it up with righteousness'.

During the investiture the priest stands behind the child, both facing east in the forenoon, west in the afternoon. He recites a prayer, and the child joins him for the following part:

The Omniscient God is the greatest Lord. Ahriman is the evil spirit that keeps back the advancement of the world. May that Evil Spirit with all his accomplices remain fallen and dejected. O Omniscient Lord, I repent of all my sins. I repent of all the evil thoughts that I may have entertained in my mind, of all the evil words that I may have spoken, of all the evil actions that I may have performed. May Ahura Mazda be praised. May Ahriman, the evil spirit, be condemned. The will of the righteous is the most praiseworthy.

During this prayer the priest puts the *kusti* round the child's waist. They then repeat together the following *Credo*:

O Almighty, come to my help. I am a worshipper of God. I am a Zoroastrian worshipper of God. I agree to praise the Zoroastrian religion, and to believe in that religion. I praise good thoughts, good words, and good actions. I praise the good Mazdayasnian religion which curtails discussions and quarrels, which brings about kinship or brotherhood, which is holy, and which, of all the religions that have yet flourished and are likely to flourish in the future, is the greatest, the best and the most excellent, and which is the religion given by God to Zoroaster. I believe that all good things proceed from God. May the Mazdayasnian religion be thus praised!

How little the daily repetition of this creed has destroyed *odium theologicum*, the most persistent weed to grow in the fertile soil of our poor humanity, will be shown in our next chapter.

The priest then pronounces a benediction, invoking blessings on the ruler of the land, on the community, and on the novice. The priests are paid their fees, the guests are garlanded, and the proceedings terminate, with light refreshments to follow in some cases, while the family priest takes the child for his first visit to the Fire-temple.

The prayers have been quoted at this length because they are of special importance, being repeated at the ceremonial untying and re-tying of the *kusti*, which is supposed to be done on getting out of bed in the morning, before meals, before saying prayers, after a bath, and on other occasions.[1] Allowing for three meals and one bath only, a Parsi would have to repeat them at least seven or eight times a day: it is not surprising that 'a modern Parsi sometimes neglects to do

[1] Only the two prayers on this page are so used.

so' on getting out of bed and before his meals. But even so he says these formulae three or four times every day of his life. Such endless repetition, if the words are understood, may tend to impress the creeds deeply on really pious souls. What effect they produce on the majority, who do not understand them, or who become mechanical, as most of us would in the perpetual repeating of the same words, may be left to be estimated from a general knowledge of human nature.

The *kusti* must be tied with the face towards the light, sun or moon, or, failing both, a lamp. It is passed round the waist three times, and there are two knots, one in front and one at the back. The symbolism attached to these had better be described in Dr Modi's words:[1]

> The knots are said to symbolize certain religious and moral thoughts. While forming the first half of the first knot in the front, a Zoroastrian must think that Ahura Mazda (God) exists, that He is one, is holy and is matchless. While forming the second half of the first knot, he must remember that the Zoroastrian religion is the Word of God, and that he must have full faith in it. While forming the first half of the second knot at the back, he is to remember that Zoroaster is the prophet of God, that he is the guide, and that he shows the proper path of worship. While forming the second half of the second knot, he is to bear in mind that he has always to attend to 'Good thoughts, good words, and good deeds'. A knot symbolizes a resolution. So these knots of the sacred thread symbolize resolutions for the above-said thoughts.

The symbolism of knots is familiar among ourselves, as many an unusable handkerchief will witness. It may be hoped that the Parsis find it more efficacious than we generally do. We have not even yet exhausted the significance attached in Parsi devotional literature to this central rite of the religion. The Pahlavi treatise Dadistan-i-Dini finds a triple symbolism in the *kusti*. First, to tie the *kamar-band* (cummerbund or waist-band) is a regular phrase for making ready for work: it is like the Old Testament idiom 'girding up the loins'. So the *kusti* symbolizes a man's obligation to stand with loins

[1] Op. cit., p. 16 f.

girt in readiness to serve God. Secondly, a belt is a badge of office when a man stands to receive orders from a superior: even so is the *kusti* a badge reminding the wearer that he stands with all humiliation before his God to receive His orders. Thirdly, the waist-girdle divides the body in two, separating the upper from the lower part: the thought is suggested that man must keep his lower self down and not let it master the higher and nobler self.

There are other daily prayers, those connected with the five *Gāhs*, the divisions of the twenty-four hours. The Avesta contains prayers for each of them, but they are of no special interest. It has been already observed that merit is won by offering those of the *Ushahina* (from *ušah*, dawn), the watch that begins at midnight.

We may take next the ceremonies connected with marriage. Some of the ritual is borrowed from India, but not so as to affect seriously its general character. There are solemn questions asked by the priests, as in our own marriage form, in answer to which bride and bridegroom declare their willingness; and there are witnesses to the ceremony. The joining of the right hands is supplemented by the passing of a string round the hands seven times. A similar symbol of the marriage knot is the encircling of the chairs on which the couple sit with a piece of cloth, the ends of which are tied to the accompaniment of a *Honover* formula. The knot is further secured by passing round it seven times the continuation of the string that binds the right hands of the pair. In their left hands are placed a few grains of rice, which at a given signal they throw at each other, and there is a keen competition as to which shall do it first. It is curious that we also have the throwing of rice, though rice is not an indigenous product with us. A general clapping of hands follows from the assembled friends. The ceremony closes with a joint address by the two priests, containing admonitions as to conduct, and prayers for blessing upon the couple. An interesting detail not yet named is the holding of a cloth

curtain between them, which is withdrawn when their hands have joined. In the Irani form of marriage a picturesque feature is the search for the bride, an obvious reminiscence of primitive marriage by capture. Seven venerable men with lighted candles go round the assembly, in which the presence of a great many children is *de rigueur*, inquiring who has seen the bride. Needless to say, they take care to begin at the end farthest from where she sits. When discovered, she is asked whether she is willing, and the candles are then dashed out. All subsequent questions, the asking and answering of which occupy quite half an hour, are taken in her name by a male friend, who sits opposite the bridegroom on a dais with the two priests, and a best man, who sits behind the bridegroom and holds a pomegranate over his head. When all is satisfactorily concluded, the bride joins her husband on the dais to receive presents and congratulations.

It will not be forgotten that the repudiation of celibacy as a religious ideal is complete.[1] In former times the Parsis were badly tainted with the Indian evil of child-marriage, but this has now been escaped. Economic conditions are indeed tending to postpone marriage rather late, and a serious reduction of the birth-rate is likely to accelerate the diminution of the community. The only marked difference between Parsi marriage law and our own is that a childless wife may urge her husband to take a second wife, both of them continuing to live with him.[2] How far sexual vice prevails among the Parsi men, it is impossible to assert. There are many who deplore its rapid spread, but others think there is no evidence for any such generalization. The proud claim is made that among their women the profession of vice is unknown. It must of course be remembered that in contrast to Hinduism, with its sacred prostitutes and its obscene emblems on temples and cars, and to Islam, with its legalizing of concubinage, Parsi religion forbids all impurity with hardly less emphasis than

[1] See above, p. 113 f.

[2] This custom is now illegal.

Christianity itself. A Parsi who gives way to vice can never plead excuses from his religion in any stage of its history.[1]

The ritual of the Vendidad presses rather seriously on women, both after child-birth and at the ordinary periods of ceremonial impurity. Anthropology can of course explain very easily the tabus upon women at such times, found among the ancient Hebrews and other peoples as well as among Parsis. Till the fortieth day after her child's birth the mother is kept in the room set apart for her, and is not permitted to move or touch anything. Similar tabus have to be observed at the other seasons of impurity. We are solemnly told that all this keeps at a distance the dangers of puerperal fever and other infectious diseases. In that context it is interesting to observe that 'all the furniture of the lying-in room except the iron bedstead and cradle is given to people of the sweeper caste',[2] who on that showing are either immune from infection, or *vile damnum*, if they take it. Pseudo-scientific justifications of primitive tabus are very much to the fore in India just now. They form a convenient half-way house to what we may assume will be the next stage, the abandonment of mere accretions upon religion, so as to give to the Caesar of sanitation the things that properly belong to him, and to God the things that are God's. There are some European writers who have encouraged Parsis to adopt these very superfluous and ineffective apologies for survivals from antiquity. The day will come when Parsis will realize that the Gathas need no apology beyond intelligible translation, and that things which need apology may be safely dropped by the inheritors of more precious treasure.

In connexion with child-birth we may note here the part played by the astrologer, who is called in to cast the horoscope. Remembering the ancient fame of the Magi in this pre-scientific lore, we might suppose the prominent position of astrology to be a genuine survival from the past; but it might

[1] On the Magian doctrine of next-of-kin marriage, see above, p. 63.
[2] *Bombay Gazetteer*, IX. ii. 229 (1898).

equally well be derived from the Indian environment. Like Roman augurs, astrologers have learnt the art of looking one another in the face without laughing. The horoscope, a document some ten feet long and nine inches wide, costs a rupee or two, and is kept with great care in a special box. It is consulted when lucky days have to be fixed, or when the owner is ill and the issue of his illness is to be predicted. It is to be feared that a majority of Parsis have a lingering belief in these foolish superstitions.

It is not necessary to give any account of the folklore which prevails, though with diminishing force, among the Parsi people. As our own parallels show, it has only a loose connexion with religion in modern days, although in its sources it was very closely akin.

Education is kept in close contact with religion. This may only mean that sacred texts are taught the child in a language he does not understand. But as education is developed —and the Parsis are pioneers—great efforts are made to give the children an intelligent knowledge of the meaning of their religion. In many Parsi schools in Bombay, which is naturally in advance of the mofussil, a very competent teacher, a graduate, is set apart to go round and give religious instruction. The schools are for girls as well as boys. While it would be too much to say that complete equality prevails between the sexes, there has been a far closer approximation to it than in any other Eastern people.

A brief reference will suffice for the special holy days of the Parsis. Conspicuous among them are the monthly *Jasans* or feasts, which fall on the day of the month which bears the same name as the month, and are in honour of the Amesha-spand or Yazad to whom the month belongs. The most popular of them is the Farvardin Jasan, held on Farvardin the nineteenth day of the first month, belonging to the Fravashis. On it the Fravashis are honoured in the grounds of the Towers of Silence. The Bahman Jasan may be named. It belongs to Vohu Manah, who is the guardian of cattle; and

special kindness to cattle marks the whole month. In addition to these monthly festivals there are six *Gahambars* or seasonal feasts, each lasting five days. In Avestan times they had special reference to the seasons, but through the neglect of the necessary intercalation they fall at present six months too soon. They have traditions of creation attached to them, which have often been compared with the order of creation given by the priestly writer in the Book of Genesis. They are respectively heaven, water, earth, trees, animals, man. The last Gahambar, with its proper five days, the 'Gatha days' which follow the 360 days of the twelve months, is associated with five other days immediately preceding. The ten are the *Muktad* (from Skt. *mukta-atman*, 'released souls'), during which the dead are commemorated. The festival is similar in some respects to the Farvardin Jasan, but is far older than any element in Zoroastrianism. It is identical with the Greek Anthesteria, the Roman festival of the Manes, and with All Souls Day, which persists in many Christian countries. The dead return to the old homes, and provision is made for them. A platform is erected in each house, on which are set many vessels filled with water, also fruit and flowers. A lamp burns night and day, and many others are added at night; sandalwood and incense are burned in an urn. And, most characteristic of the festival all the world over, food is cooked and placed near the platform that the Souls may partake. In Gujarat the first seven days of the New Year are added to these holidays, the length and importance of which show how the primitive Aryan ancestor-worship has left its traces deep in the religion of the present day.

To these must be added seven special high days. These are Navroz (New Year's Day), the first of Farvardin, the third and the sixth of Farvardin (kept as the birthday of Zarathushtra), and the seventh of the same. Then there is an interval till Deh, the tenth month, the eleventh day of which is observed as the anniversary of the Prophet's death. Last comes the twenty-ninth of the twelfth month, celebrating the

first preaching of the religion at Vishtaspa's court. There is also Jamshedi Navroz, 'Jamshid's New Year's Day,' which is the vernal equinox, the only one of the seven that is fixed by the solar year correctly. There is naturally some favour shown to a reform which would make this day the actual New Year, as in ancient Iran, thus causing the Gahambars to fall at their proper seasonal time. The other high days are curiously concentrated; all but one of them fall within a period of a fortnight, and within the eighteen Muktad days as observed in Gujarat.

Some efforts have been made to improve the quality of all these observances from a spiritual point of view. Preaching has been attempted, and meetings for prayer in the vernacular. A society called Rahnumai Sabhā, founded in 1865, tried to compose a Gujarati prayer-book and hymns, and for a time had some success in promoting their use. But the power of ancient custom, joined with the forces to be described next, has prevented the movement from developing.

# CHAPTER 5

## ORTHODOXY AND REFORM

> Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me;
> And to him that ordereth his conversation aright
> Will I show the salvation of God.

THE Parsis are in the present day very deeply divided, and their extreme sections are at least as far apart as the extremes of Christendom. Credulity at one end, almost complete denial at the other, vie with each other in the use of hard words; and religious indifference, far worse than either, claims its thousands for whom the manifold interests of this life blot out all vision of the Unseen.

We saw in the last chapter that the Parsi community makes no provision whatever for religious instruction,[1] having no teaching order, and no opportunities for the giving of religious guidance except purely spasmodic and occasional efforts. It is only natural that apathy should prevail widely among a people very clannish and proud of their caste, but mostly very ignorant of their sacred books. And it is equally natural that thinking people should fall under the influence of their environment. When that environment is modern India, the results are likely to be curiously diverse.

Some remarks on that environment are necessary if Western readers are to understand the religious condition of the Parsis. The subtle but undisciplined Indian mind has swung into extremes under the impact of the West. First came the epoch of eager acceptance, when India was proud to wear even the

[1] But see p. 168 above.

cast-off garments of European thought. Now is the epoch of reaction. The East believes itself inherently superior. We represent force, and intellect and spirituality will conquer force some day. All the material inventions of which the East is glad to take advantage are really her own coming back to her. It is written in ancient records that heroes of Indian epic took winged cars and soared into the sky: the Western aeroplane is only therefore a rediscovery. On the same showing, we might safely add, the silence of the Vedas about wires conclusively proves that Marconi was no pioneer. The antiquity of Oriental civilization is dated by a chronology for which a thousand years are as one day. An Indian judge was heard to speak in public of 'truths enunciated by the Gospels two thousand years ago, and by the Vedas twenty thousand'. And when anticipations of present-day dogmas are alleged to occur in ancient lore, and the Western savant with grammar and dictionary urges that the text will not bear the interpretation, he is told that spiritual insight has no need of such materialist methods. We urge that two and two can only make four. 'The West says so,' is the reply; 'we make it three, or under certain circumstances seventeen.' This is more paraphrase than parody.

Unfortunately India does not like to be told her faults, even by the kindliest observers and those who are most alive to her many virtues. In her present mood she is very loth to accept any counsel, and all criticism is discounted in advance. Only experience will show her that the wiser way is to choose, not the indigenous or the foreign, but the best. God grant the experience be not too dearly bought!

Both the Eastern and the Western elements in their environment have profoundly influenced the Parsis. They are justly proud of their accessibility to new ideas, and there is no section in India which knows so well how to make use of what the West can give. But they are thoroughly Oriental, for all that; and the combination of qualifications gives them unique advantages as intermediaries between East and West. Unfor-

tunately they have only used this faculty in the sphere of practical life, especially in the field of commerce. Such shining examples as B. M. Malabari and Dadabhai Naoroji show what the Parsi mind can do in politics and social reform by virtue of this gift. Incalculable benefits would come to the Parsis, and to India, if there were given to this keenly intelligent and accessible people a man of religious genius and religious fervour. Hinduism—if we may use the term very comprehensively—claims to-day such writers as Sir Rabindranath Tagore and Mrs Sarojini Naidu, who are able to make the West understand some of the fragrance of Indian poetic thought. Rudyard Kipling, in inspired pieces like 'The Miracle of Purun Bhagat', has helped his countrymen to realize the best side of Hindu mysticism. But if a Parsi of Malabari's fervour and open-mindedness should arise to interpret, there would be hope that the real contribution of India to religious thought would at last take shape. The Indian mind is strongly developed on the imaginative side, but very deficient in the critical faculty. The Parsi has less of the former than the Hindu, less of the latter than the Briton; but at his best he shows a better blend of the two than any other of the sons of the East. A very small community, which has put its brains into commerce, law, and to a less extent medicine, is by the ordinary working of probabilities not very likely to produce the genius we desiderate. But should he come, in an age not too prolific of religious genius in either East or West, he would assuredly be the instrument of a wonderful work of good for all the world alike.

The impulse towards reform came to the Parsis very largely through their contact with the West, and on chronological grounds may therefore be treated first. The general principle of the reformers has been the desire to cut out of Zoroastrianism all that could not stand the rigid tests of pure reason. A leader among them, a man of distinguished public service and profound religious conviction, set forth in an official utterance the claim that there was nothing in Zoroastrianism

to differentiate it from Rationalism or Unitarianism. Ahriman may be regarded as a kind of personification of evil impulses within us. Other picturesque doctrines are parables of the central truth that God is one, and we must please Him by good thoughts, words, and deeds, convinced that if we do so it will be well with us in a world beyond death. It will be instructive to quote the message in full:[1]

I therefore beg of you with all the earnestness I am capable of to set about the business of reform in religious matters. The first and most imperative need of the times is to have a simple creed of the Zoroastrian religion. When the fundamental beliefs are formulated, it will be seen how singularly free from all dogmas the Zoroastrian creed is. The one dogma which is often hurled at the heads of Zoroastrians by the enemies of our faith, namely, the doctrine of two independent self-created deities, Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu, continually fighting with each other, is not accepted by the best exponents of our faith, these opposing so-called deities being only the good and evil motives or feelings in our mind which are opposed to each other, before a man endowed with free will decides in favour of the good motives and bases his action upon them alone. If this dogma is discarded, there is nothing like a dogma left in the articles of our faith, which can be reduced to a very simple belief in an omniscient, all-bountiful and omnipotent God, who insists on good thought, good word and good action, and ordains evil to the evil-doer and blessings to the pure both in this world and the next, according to their thoughts, words and deeds. If our creed is thus authoritatively formulated by an ecclesiastical council formed of the best religious experts in our community, it will stand out in most favourable contrast to the creeds of other religious systems which I need hardly name, and which embody a number of dogmas that human reason cannot accept in the present times of advanced thought.

I would dwell for a moment on this aspect of our religion. It is singularly free from dogmas, and is so simple in its tenets that it differs but little from Unitarianism or Rationalism. Its system of morality is extremely simple, straightforward and practical, like the practical morality of Freemasons. It is not overlaid with metaphysical distinctions and disquisitions such as are found in the Hindu schools of philosophy, which, however ingenious and subtle they may be from an

[1] From the address of the President of the Fourth Zoroastrian Conference, 1913, Mr H. J. Bhabha, late Director of Public Instruction in Mysore State.

academic point of view, have led to harassing and unpractical observances. The progress and prosperity of the Parsis are not a little indebted to their religion, which enjoins righteousness in thought, word and deed, vigorous activity of body and mind, a hatred of asceticism, purity of conduct, cleanliness of habits, stern punishment and suppression of all evil-doers, love of all mankind, and charity without distinction of caste or creed.

It will be easily seen that the danger of this attitude is the emphasis on the negative. Reforming Parsis are so busy denying and denouncing that they have difficulty in assertion. The 'very simple creed' to which they reduce their religious belief is always liable to be curtailed. A traveller with empty pockets, says Horace, will sing when he passes the highwayman. But these pockets are not yet empty. Their treasure includes a real albeit cold Theism, and a belief in an ethical doctrine of immortality. These great fundamentals are eminently in accord with reason, but reason alone will never establish them. The materialist philosophers of the last generation but one, who are still quoted in India as representative authorities by both friends and foes of Western thought, would ruthlessly pick the traveller's pocket of even these 'reasonable' possessions; and a creed which aims at satisfying the intellect, but pays insufficient attention to the needs of the heart, is very imperfectly armed against such depredators. So prominent a reformer as the late K. R. Cama, one of the most learned of Parsis, and a layman, is said to have taken a completely agnostic position. There are not wanting men of real spirituality in the movement; but viewed broadly it cannot be said that Reform has discovered much that appeals to spiritual craving. It is natural to compare it with the great movement that holds by the 'Reformation' in Christendom. Every student of Church history knows that if the Reformation had been even mainly a protest against the errors of Rome, it would not have survived its first impulse: it lives because of its 'protest' in the historical sense, the glad affirmation of great positive principles of religious life. Parsi

Reformers have nothing of this kind to keep their movement alive. *Vacuam sedem, inania arcana* is the true motto of their system; and until they have become constructive they are doomed to fail.

From this generalization we may turn to some specific points on which Reformers take a line of their own. Very conspicuous is their insistence on the right of the community to accept new members from outside. They are of course incontrovertible when they urge that Zarathushtra was a passionately eager propagandist, and that a small caste like the modern Parsis have no claim to stand in his succession. This is not denied, but the whole stress is laid on the changed conditions of a caste with certain privileges, with charities to dispense and exclusive rights to maintain. It very soon appears that both sides are fighting on this issue, the larger conception of a missionary religion being absolutely invisible anywhere. The writer has strongly urged, in addressing Parsi meetings, that their possession in the Gathas of a pure and ethical monotheism constitutes a call to preach, placed as they are in the midst of millions whose gods are many and malignant. There has been no visible response to this plea. When first urged, the reform organ immediately acclaimed a new recruit to their cause, in spite of very plain words which may be quoted as showing how the issue was placed before them:

> I long for the service warm-hearted Zoroastrians might render to lead their countrymen to higher ideals. I am not referring to the vexed question of proselytism. Whether you should admit outsiders to the privileges of your own community is a purely domestic question for yourselves, on which I should consider it almost an impertinence to have an opinion, quite apart from expressing it. But I cannot believe there are any among you who want to have a monopoly of a pure doctrine of God, a lofty view of duty, and the promise of happiness as the eternal reward of well-doing. I feel that we may ask for your sympathy and even your help in putting such an emancipating gospel before people whose only idea of God is one of terror. It must be possible to entertain this unselfish ambition without clashing against

> the principle which forbids your enlarging the Parsi community. I can assure you, from experience in other circles of religion, that such a passion for sharing the good things of your ancient faith with multitudes who are in spiritual darkness is the one certain way of bringing a new springtide of life into your own people and into your own individual souls. May the Wise Lord Himself give you wisdom and blessing![1]

The misinterpretation of these words was successfully cleared up; but it is recalled here by way of showing how far the missionary idea is from the mind of either party. The reformers want to admit proselytes, who will practically always be wives or husbands of Parsis, because they are afraid of the caste's dying out. The orthodox are unwilling to give other people the gospel of their Prophet, because they fear it would lead to proselytism, which means for them the admission of undesirable outsiders to the privileges of their community. If Zarathushtra were to return from Garonmana, he would have to search long for a Zoroastrian after his missionary heart!

Another subject about which the reformers are in revolt is the use of prayers in a dead language, unknown to ninety per cent. of those who use them. How the latter-day orthodox defend this practice we shall be seeing presently. Here it is enough to observe that the old Avestan prayers and formulae have sacred associations for the people, and it would be safer to interpret and to supplement them than to abolish them. All depends on the prayers which are substituted. One prominent reformer told the writer that he regularly used the Lord's Prayer for his petition—there was nothing better. That is a real step with the old Mobeds on the way to Saoshyant in Bethlehem.

With this may be put the reformers' campaign against ceremonies which for them are mostly meaningless. They insist on the Gathas as the norm, and the Later Avesta and

[1] *The Zoroastrian Inheritance* (Feb. 11, 1916), *ad fin.* Quoted with a verbal correction from *The Teaching of Zarathushtra*, pp. 9, 10.

its ceremonial system as a declension: it is time to return to the simpler and purer faith of the Founder. They not only abandon most of the ceremonies for themselves, but preach the futility of them, for a people so advanced as the Parsis. Here we see very naturally the same uneasiness about childish ritual that is apparent among educated Hindus; and there is the same double effect upon the community—one extreme giving up with undisguised contempt what seems too puerile for a highly cultured class, the other taking refuge behind the welcome screen of theosophy, the true quality of which is for the present not realized.

To the revolt against ritual, and the use of a dead language in worship, the reformers add another subject of protest which links them on the negative side with the reformed form of Christianity. We have already commented on the controversy that rages still as to intercessory 'masses' for the dead. In Parsi theology the 'heresy' was occasioned by the failure to distinguish between *urvan* and *fravashi*, the individual soul and the heavenly counterpart which existed before birth. So says the reformer.[1] But if the doctrine is accepted that the *urvan* and the *fravashi* are united at death, it does not become so clear that the orthodox were wrong. Moreover we have seen that, historically, the *fravashi* is an ancestor-spirit pure and simple on one side of his evolution, copiously illustrated in the Farvardin Yasht. The identification of the two after death is therefore no mere afterthought of Pahlavi Rabbins: it is a fair inference from the Yasht, and is indeed directly countenanced by a sentence that stands in the Avesta text,[2] and can only be condemned as a gloss on purely subjective grounds.

But does this justify 'saying masses' to get a soul out of hell? There is no question about a *fravashi* here: the *fravashi* of a Daevayasnian simply does not exist, as such. And as a matter of fact the *fravashi* is altogether out of sight in the All Souls feast. It is inconsistent with any doctrine of

[1] As Dhalla, *Zor. Theol.*, p. 347. [2] See p. 150.

the felicity of the righteous: dwellers in the House of Song do not need to come back once a year to their sorrowing relatives for gifts of food and clothing. The whole doctrine of the All Souls anniversary is far older than either Zoroastrianism or Christianity, and is not easy to reconcile with either. The Avestan system from first to last declares that a man goes to heaven or hell according as the total of his merits or demerits weighs heavier in the scale. To get a footing for intercession—if the *barashnum* ceremony can be interpreted as such—without sacrificing this central doctrine of the weighing of merits and demerits is flatly impossible. Whether the reformer is more successful in giving a rational account of the ceremony held for the dead, after the fourth day, when his destiny is determined, may be equally questioned. The ceremonies are for the *fravashi* of the dead man, not for his soul, and therefore benefit the living who are helped by the powerful spirit when thus invoked. The theory implies that the dead man is pious, and that the *fravashi* attached to him will be propitiated by ceremonies of the kind. How to prove, on principles of unassisted reason, that exalted spiritual beings care for rites like the *barashnum*, we must leave it to the Parsi to discover: to the outsider at any rate the problem seems no easy one.

Among the ceremonial practices against which the enlightened have revolted, those imposed on women have been conspicuous. A rule which forbids a woman, during a period of technical impurity, to look upon the dead body of her dearest relative, seemed to be self-condemned. Like the use of *gomez*, against which all sense of refinement protests except under the most powerful influence of religious conviction, the rules appealed to men of a modern turn of mind as relics of a bygone age which no longer justified themselves to the intellect and made no appeal to the heart. The reformers could give them up without difficulty in their own personal practice. There is no authority in the Parsi community which can excommunicate a Parsi for neglect of

religious rules. And when the reformer tries to enforce his views upon others, there is no assembly that can settle the question by its vote. Nothing follows the hot discussion, but conviction on the part of some, and fury on the part of the unthinking or the unconvicted. It is with them even as in the Lost Paradise:

> And of their vain dispute appeared no end.

We have now to ask how educated and refined Parsis devised an apologetic for ancient usage which would act as a temporary shelter against the monsoon deluge of modernism. The desiderated umbrella is one of a convenient shape, specially designed for the Indian climate. It is in large use among Hindus. A strictly modern patent, which has not been taken up in the West except by a few freaks, it is only a very old invention, made up to look new. It used to be called Gnosticism. It is now called Theosophy, an appropriate term for a system of fantastic sophistry which sets itself to make Theism absurd. The difference between it and its ancient prototype is that Gnosticism was mostly honest, a character which the founders of Theosophy hardly troubled to claim. The system was nursed in fraud and has matured in immorality. Parsis have mostly forsaken it as an organized system, just because of its unsavoury character; but the habit of mind induced by it has unfortunately spread widely among them.

Theosophy as a whole lies outside the subject of this book, but no one who wants to understand the Parsis can ignore it. The restrained but damning exposure in Dr Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements in India* should be carefully read, and the Christian Literature Society pamphlets by the Rev. E. W. Thompson. A very able Parsi scholar, Prof. P. A. Wadia, published a searching critique in 1904, and more lately has edited an English and Gujarati serial, the *Journal of the Iranian Association*, which has for its chief aim the exposure of theosophic heresy as it affects Parsi religion. It will suffice to mention these outstanding examples of a much

needed candour. In England the whole thing seems so intensely stupid that the importance of studying and exposing it is altogether overlooked. That is a very serious mistake. In itself it is no more worth studying than the writings of the late Mrs Baker Eddy. But as a phase of Hinduism it does call for study from all who take India to heart. There is no reason for either despising or reprobating the Indian who passes the base metal which Western coiners have palmed off on him. We remember the problem that faced thinkers in the early Church. They inherited the Old Testament, but they had not found the historical key which for us opens all its serious difficulties. So, taught by Christianity to realize its moral problems as a very real stumbling-block, they went off on two lines of escape which seem to us equally impossible. Either with Marcion they threw over the Old Testament altogether, or with the orthodox they devised allegorical explanations the absurdity of which makes us gasp. And yet it was minds as great as Origen's that devised them. Now let us remember that the educated Hindu is in a far worse difficulty of the same kind. He inherits a religious legacy from prehistoric ancestors, Dravidianized and then superficially Aryanized, but piously preserved. The inherent conservatism of religion, which is responsible for the sinister word 'superstition', that is 'survival', has nowhere had so perfect a work as in India. The well-known case of Greece shows that a highly intellectual nation may conserve the veriest rubbish, by the gradual change of the nursery into a temple, its cast-off toys into sacred things. All the keen Athenian humour did not protect grave citizens from participating in solemn farces like the trial of a stone or a knife for killing a man, and the ceremonial casting of the guilty thing into the sea. The Indian has a great mass of survivals, many of them—again as at Athens—preserving the once naïve but now obscene ritual of primitive man. He has inherited the conviction that all these things are bound up with religion, and that the wrath of Heaven will fall on those who neglect or despise them. No wonder he

accepts with avidity and relief the occult lore which promises to justify to modern culture the outworn and impossible inheritance. How deeply it is ingrained it is beyond our utmost power to realize. Convinced and earnest Christian leaders, with three or four generations of Christian conviction behind them, have confessed to the hold it has still. The striking words of one of the foremost of them may be quoted, from a private letter, to illustrate a fact which no missionary should overlook :[1]

> Let me give you an illustration from my own experience. I am a Christian and a Christian worker by choice, giving up Government service for the purpose. . . . And yet from my railway carriage window when I first caught a glimpse of the tower of the temple at Chidambaram my heart gave a great leap. Strains of devotional poetry surged through my mind. If I were a Hindu I should have fallen prostrate right on the carriage floor towards that tower and worshipped in absolute devotion that shrine which calls for such worlds of devotion all over the Tamil land. The poetry representing it had thrilled my being long years before I had a sight of that sacred building.
>
> I do not know what you think of me when I have made this confession. I do not see how it is inconsistent and compromising for me to say this and hold the conviction that Christ must and will dominate my country and my people. But such is not to be realized without recognizing the tremendous hold which our traditions and our sacred things have, and let me say rightly have, on our minds and beings.

This being so, we may be able to see why the Indian mind is not critical as ours is when Theosophy comes its way. The will to believe affects the most rationalist of thinkers, and those who imagine they look at all things in the driest of dry light. The absurdity of Mrs Besant's clever nonsense will dawn on the educated Hindu some day; but we have no right to plume ourselves on superior sagacity because it does not appeal to us. There is no conceivable reason why it should. It solves no problems of ours; it offers no plausible excuse for keeping old toys of which we are very fond,

[1] From Mr K. T. Paul, General Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. in India (1917). I have his permission to publish them.

and yet ashamed, as adults must be. All the exposure and all the ridicule which Theosophy has received seems to leave the Indian mind untouched. Before we condemn the Indian as destitute of logic, of morality, and of humour, let us be sure that we realize how almost irresistible is the impulse which recommends this new apologetic for Hinduism. For popular Hinduism, unless attenuated by sacrificing all that is most characteristic, must be defended in this way or not at all.

How much of this defence will serve the Parsi Theosophist? Assuredly not its conclusion. For he has a religion the nucleus of which needs no defence except exposition and faithful obedience. It is the Parsi departure from the Gathas that has given Theosophy its chance. Parsi ceremonial has no immoralities to be excused, and few features which demand any very violent revolt on the part of the educated. But that it smacks strongly of the nursery is obvious in many places. A scheme which can veil absurdities behind scientific jargon, and justify things hard to take seriously by suggestions of profound underlying doctrine, has very clear attractiveness. There is therefore the same sort of motive as that which appeals to the cultured Hindu. The ritual is not primitive, it has no claim whatever to the Zoroastrian paternity it claims, and it is really—as the outsider can more easily see —not merely absent from the Gathas but foreign to their spirit. But it is traditional, and the tradition is at least two thousand years old. It has been with the Parsis during the whole of their Indian life. And the very qualities which make Theosophy go down with the Indian make a strong appeal to the Parsi. For all his accessibility to Western ideas, he is an Indian, and cherishes a proper pride in his nationality. When therefore a system comes to him which defends his immemorial ritual on lines that to his far from impartial mind seem plausible, he is not minded to be critical. But however easily we may find excuses for his misuse of science and his ready acceptance of Hindu doctrines which

are altogether foreign to Parsi theology in any stage, we cannot avoid an effort to appeal to his keen intelligence against accretions which are undermining all true Parsi orthodoxy.

Let us take some of the points separately. We may mention, only to dismiss it, a movement called *Khshnum* ('Enlightenment'), which is a thoroughgoing adaptation of Theosophy, naked and unashamed, Mahatmas and all. Its prophet met Great Ones a generation ago in those conveniently near regions of Baluchistan, where—'until the times do alter'—the Infinite Inane may shelter safely from all perils of verification. They taught him wisdom too profound to express itself in the poor vocabulary of the English language. But the fortunate inhabitants of Surat may hear his doctrine distilled as the dew in Gujarati; and even the darkness of Bombay is illuminated once a fortnight for the faithful six score or so who care to come. We mention this for completeness' sake and because the phenomenon is not without significance as a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Since Theosophy, despite all its brave attempts to pass itself off as an eclectic system, is in India nothing but an interpretation of Hinduism, we are not surprised to find its influence on Parsi doctrine exerted very largely to introduce Hindu ideas. The merit of celibacy is perhaps the most astonishing of its innovations. We have already seen [1] that asceticism is foreign to early or later Zoroastrianism, and celibacy absolutely defiant of it. There is room in the Christian system for a special 'call' which is served by the forgoing of family ties: witness Paul himself and many a modern missionary. But Parsi scriptures of all dates repudiate the very thought of it fiercely. Theosophy, which has the faculty of creation *ex nihilo*, and can make two and two come to what it pleases, juggles with the ancient faith and inserts and cuts out *nots* wherever it will. And Parsis who obey this new

[1] See pp. 113 f., 166.

regulation for attaining spiritual heights are called 'Orthodox'. It is strange.

Asceticism takes a much more harmless form when it proceeds to forbid animal food, of course under an impulse derived from Indian religions. Here again Christianity would be less uncompromising than ancient Zoroastrian scriptures. We remember Paul's emphatic declaration that if he found flesh-eating proved a snare to his brother he would never touch meat again. The plea of kindness to animals naturally appeals to the higher instincts which the Gospel fosters. And yet there is a mistaken shifting of emphasis, all too visible when the working of the rule of *ahiṃsā* is studied. Cruelty to living creatures is practised by multitudes in India who would shrink in horror from putting the maimed beast out of its misery. The life of man moreover matters far less than that of lower animals, as we see when the Jain sets free plague rats from traps. Against this stands the well-known and most prominent Magian law as to the merit of killing noxious animals. It was a central feature of the system to set aside which, as the Indianized Theosophist does, is rather drastic 'orthodoxy'. It would matter less if the Parsi innovator frankly cancelled this rule, and the indisputable practice of Parsi antiquity sanctioning the eating of meat, declaring that new and higher light had come. But it is *de fide* dogma that inspiration ceased long ago; and the text of ancient scripture must therefore be understood according to occult principles, which put the mere philologist in his proper place. If the Vendidad lays it down that animals created by Ahriman are to be destroyed as a work of piety, occult 'science' has its own easy rubric. The doctrine of the esoteric meaning of ancient scripture is conveniently applicable all round. Every 'prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation', belonging to the adepts alone. It seems that the last Parsi adept died three centuries ago, so that it must be left to the occultist to rediscover the lost key. In addition to promising this the Theosophist assures the trustful Parsi that

the lost Nasks of the Avesta are in safe keeping, of course in Tibet, and will reappear one day. Clairvoyance can always meanwhile promise to read them.

To refute all this by facts and argument is made impossible by the very range of the assertions. These things are 'spiritually discerned', and outsiders can no more understand these mysteries than an African savage can understand a Marconi apparatus. The only answer is a demand for credentials; and when we remember the record of fraud with which the Society opened its history, and scan the career of European and American successors who have so worthily carried on the adventuress Blavatsky's traditions, we can easily understand why honest seekers after truth generally hold aloof. But what an irony it is that in days when Western importations are suspect *per se*, the East should attend to prophets who for the best of reasons are not honoured in their own country!

With this fact in mind, we can proceed to consider the modifications of Zoroastrian doctrine which owe their impulse to the Theosophic method, but are pursued independently of the Adyar factory. Some of the most deservedly respected Parsis interpret their ancient religion in terms of this essentially Hindu method, and declare that it has done much to deliver their people from materialism. In the light of that claim we may try to show what has happened to some of the leading doctrines of the community under this dispensation.

Its general influence is curiously diverse in its operation. On one side it acts in a latitudinarian direction. Outward compliance with ritual practice goes with a private neglect, justified by the claim to have reached a plane of religious experience in which such things are no longer needed. On the other, we have esoteric lore tacked on to the ritual, which gains a new lease of life by a series of explanations that would have greatly puzzled the composers of the Vendidad.

First we may mention the application which has the most plausible grounds for affiliating itself to the Magian theology.

The modern justification for the use of prayers in a dead and unknown tongue is an adaptation of the doctrine of the *manthra*, or spell. The notion that words have mystic efficacy, quite apart from their meaning, is an inheritance from primitive religion, and is world-wide. Zarathushtra himself was not ignorant of it, but with his deep religious instinct set it aside. A greater even than Zarathushtra condemned 'unintelligible words'[1] in prayer, which expects to be heard from sheer volubility. Theosophy, which is prepared to find high modern-sounding justification for every survival from the nursery of religion, tells us gravely that the sacred words produce potent vibrations, even as, if the right note be once caught, one may cause a suspension bridge to quiver with a violin. Without tarrying to examine the violin question, we might quote Dr Dhalla's summary:

> The syllables composed in the Avestan texts, they aver, are so mysteriously adjusted to each other in the prayers, that they produce vibrations on the ethereal plane, when pronounced. The potency of such rhythmical sound is so great, that, like every good thought that flashes out with strong occult force and sounds forth a good 'elemental', it creates forms in the ethereal world, attracts good 'elementals', and repels evil ones. Every single sentence conveys an occult meaning, and the prayers composed in the celestial tongue of the prophet and other seers have an unspeakable efficacy conducing to the welfare of the individual concerned, but their renderings into any modern vernacular would make them totally ineffectual as prayers.[2]

Such a conception of prayer is obviously as far from Zarathushtra as the cotton rags that float from the prayer-masts at the top of the sacred hill at Darjeeling are from Buddha. It may be added that the sounds which have this occult potency are not even the words of the original Gathas, but a modern and unrecognizable mispronunciation.

[1] Matt. 6[7]. Βατταλογεῖν appears to mean 'gabble', the use of words for words' sake, depending on mere quantity for their efficacy. See the verb discussed in Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, s. v.

[2] *Zor. Theol.*, p. 362.

Thus the Honover begins:

*athāu veryo thare tose sāde chide chāvanghoise dezdā manengho.*

To chant the original:

*yathā ahu vairyo athā ratush ashāt chit*
*hachā vangheush dazdā manangho*

would apparently leave the ethereal plane unresponsive.[1]

The use of modern scientific terminology is a strong point with these ingenious defenders of survivals. An able and high-minded scholar discovers a primitive purpose to create 'pyro-electricity' in a part of the ritual.

> There can be no other meaning in the officiating divine touching the edge of the fire-altar with the fire-spoon after having established contact with the other priest or priests by holding one another's hands, and also in his touching with that spoon, so charged, the vessels containing the consecrated things. Even though the principle may have been forgotten now, the practice clearly points to a thermo-electrization.[2]

It does not seem possible to convince really serious men like this that they are confounding the two great categories of Material and Spiritual, on which Zarathushtra laid such stress. If Evil can be destroyed by a 'thermo-electric current', Evil is purely material, and the measures we take against it are all of the same order as our putting disinfectants down an offensive drain. Spirituality has small chance of surviving long the enthronement of such a method. How far physical science will respond to this touching confidence, we must leave to the experts to determine. Western doctors have probably not examined the beneficial effects of a thermo-electric current communicated to a ring of expectants, linked as for 'Auld Lang Syne', and attached to a poker held on the hob of the fire. It is hoped that after this hint they will give so promising a therapeutic method the attention it deserves.

[1] Ib., p. 345.
[2] *Aerpatastan and Nirangastan.* Translated by S. J. Bulsara, M.A. (Bombay, 1915). Preface, R.X. Ziv, note.

To the same order of thought belongs the Theosophic justification of the periodic isolation of women. The Later Avestan conception of the *Hvarenah*, or 'Kingly Glory',[1] is violently interpreted as something attached to every individual, and is nothing else than the 'magnetic aura' which, as we doubtless know, surrounds us all. Those who have developed their inherent clairvoyant powers can see other people's 'aura' and discern their spiritual state. It seems that women in these isolation times have their aura spiritually diseased, so that if they leave their seclusion even to see a husband or child that is dead they will impart contagion. It does not appear that the inventors of this eminently scientific doctrine, from whom earnest Parsis have borrowed it to uphold a hard-pressed tradition, teach that lying or fraud or immorality affect the sinner's 'aura': no clairvoyant seems to have detected anything wrong with the aura of 'H. P. B.', or those of later impostors. Theosophy is essentially non-moral, and is not interested in mere questions of right or wrong.

Theosophic transformation of Zoroastrianism includes the adaptation of an ancient heresy which was incorporated in Mithraism, the exaltation of Zervan Akarana, 'Boundless Time,' as the supreme deity from whom Ormazd and Ahriman emanated. The use of this shadowy conception, stoutly repudiated by the orthodoxy of the Sassanian age, and of course altogether foreign to the Gathas, enables the Theosophist to force upon Parsi religion the alien notion of an impersonal divinity, a featureless neuter of which nothing can be predicated. This is easily recognized as the Brahma of philosophic Hinduism, and we may leave it to the philosophers, and the students of Hinduism itself. Here it is enough to say that this denial of personality to 'the One', and the ideal for men of being merged in this Universal Absolute, is wholly foreign to Zoroastrian religious doctrine. As Dr Dhalla well puts it,

> This doctrine is certainly not Zoroastrian, because through the whole history of the religion individuality is not an illusion. It is ever a stern

[1] See above, p. 98.

> fact. Personality is not an imperfection, but it is the highest expression of life, that ultimately strives for the divine. Not the losing of individuality and the loss of the personal self, and not the weakening of personality, but the gaining and strengthening of it, is the Zoroastrian ideal.[1]

He goes on to observe truly that the Theosophic adaptation of 'Boundless Time' is not even justified by an ancient heresy. For the Zervanists were actuated by the desire to save their religion from the stigma of dualism: to avoid the suggestion of two gods, they made Ormazd and Ahriman twin offspring of one original deity, who was as personal as they.

Passing by the minor developments of this strange 'orthodoxy', we come to the most important innovation of all, the engrafting of the *punarjanma* slip upon the old stock, and the strange fruit that has since appeared on the tree. It is usually admitted without demur that the accretion is due to Hinduism, though sometimes an attempt is made to wrest some Zoroastrian scripture to suit the doctrine. Such high authorities as the orthodox Dastur Darab and the great reforming scholar K. R. Cama agree with the 'heretic' Dhalla that the doctrine is altogether alien. Against this an attempt is made to claim *Ys.* $49^{11}$:

> But these that are of an evil dominion, of evil deeds, evil words, evil self, and evil thought men of the Lie, the Souls *come to meet them* with foul food.

Here the Theosophist hopefully translates the italicized verb 'return'. The reader can judge what sort of sense it makes, and how strong a case it presents for a doctrine absent from every other Gathic text, even on Theosophic interpretation. Silence cannot be ignored when we are examining texts that are predominantly occupied with the conditions of the Hereafter. From the Later Avesta a Theosophist quoted *Vd.* $13^{50}$ f., a passage in which it is asked where the ghost of a dog goes. If we were dealing with intelligent argument, it would

[1] *Zor. Theol.*, p. 364.

probably be assumed that the reference was wrong; but this passage proves reincarnation quite as conclusively as any other.

The safer line for the sincere Parsi believer in *punarjanma* is to give up the effort to find it in the Avesta, and admit that it is an importation. The theory is one which entirely deserves serious examination, in the form it takes in the minds of Parsis, protected as they are from its Indian extravagances by the soundness of their own inherited theology. It is indeed possible for Parsis to plead a very weighty Western authority for the view that the first germ of the theory came from the Magi. Dr D. B. Spooner holds that the rise of the doctrine, which is altogether unknown in the Vedas, is to be traced to the Magian conception of the Fravashis as pre-existent spirits. We must not turn aside to discuss this, which is a question remote from our present business: we must, however, note that the purely Hindu doctrine, which is what the Parsi Theosophist believes, has in any case taken a form too seriously divergent from the Parsi scriptures to make the plea avail for anything but a study of origins.

Let us attempt to put the doctrine in its most plausible form, using as far as possible the arguments actually advanced by representative Parsis. The starting-point is the declaration that the Avestan eschatology leaves a gap. The soul goes to the House of Song, or the House of the Lie, until the Regeneration. No provision is made for its discipline in heaven; and yet *ex hypothesi* heaven contains a great many whose merits only slightly outweighed demerits, so that there must be need of cleansing. Moreover, finite action must exhaust its effects in time: an eternity of bliss cannot result from a limited amount of merit achieved in a limited time. The span of a single life is too short to admit of decisive influence upon the great world-war between Good and Evil. It is therefore reasonable to accept from Hinduism the doctrine that further necessary discipline is supplied by reincarnation. The *urvan*, leaving the *fravashi* behind in heaven, returns to human life,

promoted in station according to its merit balance. How the necessary *infinite* merit is to be gathered, needed for ultimate abiding in Garonmana, does not appear. Logic seems to require infinite reincarnation, a corollary from which the Parsi must shrink. Clearly if the Gathas declare that the good man shall abide for ever in the House of Song, it will hardly satisfy the scripture to maintain that he will begin that blessedness only after an infinite series of earthly existences. Moreover, earthly existence requires an earth to exist on, and that is to be transformed when the Molten Metal is poured forth.

Applied to the case of the bad man, the doctrine is built on the distinctly purgatorial character of Hell in the Later Avestan and Pahlavi system. The vision of Ardā-i-Vīraf presents a bad man suffering agonies with all his body except a foot, which had once done a good action and is rewarded for it. This is taken to imply that the punishment is remedial, and exercised upon the faculties that have sinned, so as to purge them one by one. At the Regeneration, as all Later Avestan theology taught, evil men are to be cleansed finally. The Parsi transmigrationist infers that the purgation will be worked out through reincarnation in human lives on lower levels. The Borgias and Leopolds begin again as sweepers, or blind beggars. Thus are the inequalities of life accounted for. Their spiritual demerit bears fruit in the spiritual plane, their acts of wrong come out in external and tangible results. By humble and earnest right-doing in their new life of degraded or suffering conditions, they begin to climb. The difficulty is that being unconscious of their past wickedness they have no experience to teach them wisdom. But the new lore of the subliminal consciousness steps in, and shows that experience may work without being recognized. This must be left to the psychologists. Assuming it sound, we should still wonder how *all* sinners are goaded up the ladder in time for the Renovation. Sweepers and blind beggars being rajahs or sages who behaved badly in their high station, we expect to find them

all behaving virtuously now, which is not visibly true. The Doms of Benares, hereditary scavenger-thieves, have indeed begun to climb within these last few years, since a Christian missionary came to teach them self-respect, and gave them hope through a Gospel of redemption. It is very interesting if the Gospel is destined to be the power that makes the theory work.

# CHAPTER 6

## PARSI PIETY

I stood in the midst of the world,
And in flesh was I seen of them,
And I found all drunken
And none found I athirst among them;
And my soul is grieved over the sons of men,
Because they are blind and see not,
Poor and know not their poverty.

*Agraphon Jesu.*

THE supreme test of a religion is its power of producing saints. If it can do this, there must be life in it, however encrusted it be with error and beset with elements that historically and practically compel strong condemnation. If it cannot, the purest and loftiest theory of religion, the most splendid array of poetry and philosophy, will not redeem it from an inexorable doom. And what are saints? It would be a bold thing to attempt a definition. Beauty, poetry, love—all the greatest things of life refuse to be defined. But the Book which has made more saints than all other books put together has a summary which goes far towards the portraiture we seek:

> He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?[1]

There is none other commandment greater than these, which bid men love their neighbour as themselves, and their God with heart and life, with mind and strength. By such tokens the King of Saints knows His own in every land.

One who loves and reveres Zarathushtra confesses with

[1] Micah $6^8$.

keen reluctance that saintship seems less easy to find in his community than in some religions which are far inferior in the apprehension of Truth. The reader will have realized ere this that with all its grandeur and purity Zoroastrianism as a whole has a certain coldness. The glow of the Gathas cools down at once when we get out of the Prophet's own period. Indeed, if one must analyse a teacher one prefers to admire, even Zarathushtra hardly stands out among 'the goodly fellowship of the prophets' for warmth and tenderness and passion. He is tremendously in earnest, and he sees Truth with an intense clearness. But the human tragedy as it appeals to Gautama leaves uncertain hints of its presence in the Gathas. Truth is great, and will prevail, but only when helped by Love, which is greater still. And Love is not the power that inspires the Gathas. The very word is practically absent from them.[1]

There is another characteristic of Zoroastrianism, early and later, which has worked against the production of saints. There is relatively little opening for the cultivation of self-renunciation. Dr Dhalla says very truly:[2]

> Zoroastrianism stands for self-assertion. Despite their insignificant numbers, the inherent and dominant characteristics of the Parsis made them self-sufficient in the midst of the Hindus of Gujarat, whose religious ideals were self-surrender and self-renunciation.

But can we be so sure that the Parsi ideal here claimed is really of more value religiously than what is assigned to the Hindu? What if that quality be not really the secret of the amazing vitality of Hinduism, and the self-assertion of the Parsi the very quality which accounts for the failure of his religion in the struggle for existence?

Let us pursue this question on ground highly favourable to the defender of Parsi ideals. We have seen that in all periods the religion of Zarathushtra has utterly repudiated asceticism.

[1] In *Ys.* 49[8] I have accepted Geldner's rendering of a word occurring nowhere else, and read 'To all eternity we would be beloved', that is, by God. But Bartholomae and the Pahlavi tradition take it otherwise; and if Geldner is right, it is but the exception proving the rule.

[2] *Zor. Theol.*, p. 343.

There are very strong reasons for applauding its attitude as ideally sound. And yet we must admit that this involves the closing of a door of self-sacrifice which has often led to high degrees of sainthood. It is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, and Parsi religion definitely encourages the getting of riches. Logic and religion alike combine to declare the man who has children a potential benefactor to his fellow men, and the ascetic is no doubt revealed in history not infrequently as a charlatan seeking glory of men, or occult power from heaven. Nevertheless he has been very often utterly sincere, and animated by the passion of self-sacrifice for the highest ends. Such men have chosen the hard path, and *per ardua ad aethera* is a law which all experience has guaranteed. To accept the world and make the best of it, for its Creator's sake, seems to be demanded by very loyalty to Him: if He made us with two eyes, it seems an insult to His wisdom that we should pluck one out and cast it from us as a snare that brings us into evil. And yet the deepest religious instinct has always told us that the way of renunciation is the way of highest good; and Zarathushtra himself chose that way when he became a missionary and suffered hardship with his gospel. To use God's gifts and not refuse them, to take the call to sacrifice when it comes and not go out of the way to find it, is no doubt the higher and truer way.

> The trivial round, the common task,
> Will furnish all we ought to ask,
> Room to deny ourselves, a road
> To bring us daily nearer God.

Yet for the hardness of men's hearts there has sometimes been given a divine leading on a very different road, since the acceptance and right use of the world is so much more dangerous for poor human nature than the course that brings self-sacrifice, even though the particular self-sacrifice be needless and almost wrong.

It is this absence of a strong call to sacrifice which lies at the root, it would seem, of the failure of Parsi religion to-day.

For that the religion has failed it is impossible for the most kindly observer to question. The mere counting of the community determines our answer. For every follower that Zarathushtra claims to-day, Gautama claims thousands. It is useless to reply that Buddhists have diverged immensely from the system and the ideals of their Founder. The Parsis, as we have seen, are no less removed from theirs. But it is possible in both cases to recognize a certain responsibility for the sequel in the character of the impulse originally imparted. So far as we have the materials for comparison, Zarathushtra was as great, as earnest, as noble and truth-loving, as Gautama himself; and his doctrine was far superior, in that he rested all his hopes for man upon the power, the wisdom, and the beneficence of God. Gautama, who never met with Theism in a form that could help him in his problem, left God out of his solution. His own apotheosis by later ages is the Nemesis of Gautama's failure. 'All men crave for gods,' says Homer; and if their inherited religion has nothing to worship, they will borrow something, or make it for themselves. For God has created us for Himself; and whatever theory men may form to solve the riddle of life and soothe the smart of its pain, the human heart must always be restless till it rests in Him—in such an apprehension of Him as the blurred mirror of this world will enable men to seize.

It is not our task to discuss Gautama, except as a foil to the older Prophet, the study of whose message is the subject of this work. We have begun to ask wherein Zarathushtra failed. To ask the question is distasteful but necessary; and after all, study of his limitations is a real means towards the appreciation of what he achieved. Remembering the distant time at which he appeared, we are more and more impressed with the grandeur and the purity of his revelation. But we have observed the vital fact that he inspired no successor. No Elisha caught the great Prophet's mantle as he soared on the wings of fire to the House of Song; no gentle man of God remained to supplement the Elijah message of the One Deity,

holy and righteous, with the gracious teaching that might win the hearts as well as the minds of men. Vishtaspa, Frashaoshtra, Jamaspa, and the rest were no doubt sincere and eager followers, but they did not supply the needed supplement to the message. The long roll of saints in the Farvardin Yasht, whose names are all we know of them [1]—

> the unknown good who rest
> In God's still memory folded deep—

may well have included many a noble soul. But the possibility that there were mute, inglorious Zarathushtras *in posse* among them does not alter the fact that the religion bearing Zarathushtra's name has never received a fresh inspiration carrying it beyond the point at which the Founder left it. For that task there was needed a 'Zarathushtrotara', if we may coin a comparative to describe something 'more than Zarathushtra', in the sense in which the least in the Kingdom of Heaven was greater than John the Baptist. The Parsis have had officially a 'Zarathushtrotema', by which superlative they describe a supreme pontiff.[2] But they have no inclination to apply the term to any teacher of their own time.

In November 1915 the writer had the privilege of seeing Benares under the guidance of a missionary, the Rev. C. P. Cape, who has left his mark on the holy city in a wonderful work for the uplift of the outcastes. We visited a large square hall, the temple of a small sect calling itself *Radhasoami*. We crossed the marble floor in stockinged feet, and stood by the life-size photograph of a *guru* which was built into a small monument on the level pavement over his ashes. There we talked till darkness fell with two priests of this weird doctrine.[3] They proved to be Parsis! We asked them why they had

[1] The Pahlavi books contain a few words about some of them.

[2] A Dastur is *ex officio* Zarathushtrotema, said a good Parsi to me, but it depends on the man. In other words, a Dastur is a supreme authority when one agrees with him—like a bishop with some Episcopalians. The superlative is held by Bartholomae (*Wörterbuch, sub voce*) to denote a Yazad presiding over the priestly order—its Fravashi, we might say.

[3] See Dr Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements in India*, pp. 157–73.

adopted this new faith, and we were told that Zarathushtra died long ages ago, and men craved a living voice. And alas! this was said over the ashes of their *guru*, who died in 1907.

The Radhasoami priest offered the most searching criticism of the faith in which he was born. Zarathushtra died three millennia ago, and men need a living voice. Christianity would be in a like unhappy plight if it depended on dead Prophets like Paul and Peter, or even the Luthers and Wesleys of modern times. The sage of Iran was not, like Moses, the founder of a goodly fellowship that 'took up the torch of life and passed it on'. Perhaps we have instinctively expressed the reason in the very line we have quoted.[1] For Zarathushtra was assuredly led by God in the Way, and he had a great, a splendid vision of Truth. But of the Life he had only a very partial knowledge, for Life is in the Love of God, and that Love was not revealed to him. We might profitably turn to Israel for a parallel. The earliest of the writing Prophets, Amos, had a wonderful grip of the great principles of God's inflexible righteousness, His judgement against sin, and His promises to those who should turn and seek him. It was reserved for Hosea to learn in the school of sorrow the infinite tenderness of God towards sinful humanity, and so to prepare the way for incarnate Love. Iran had its Amos, but its Hosea never came. For Israel's Hosea was one in a great succession; Zarathushtra stands alone. The strength and truth of his message deteriorated as it came into the hands of successors who could not even read its archaic language; and truths which he had failed to apprehend were not added by Prophets taking up his teaching and carrying it further.

Let us pursue a little longer the necessary task of analysing the elements in which Zarathushtra's message was religiously deficient. We may preface the analysis by observing that we only do what we must do for every Prophet who came before the Gospel, or apart from the Gospel. It is a very great thing

[1] *Et quasi cursores uitai lampada tradunt* (Lucretius).

indeed that there is nothing but defect to urge against him. Even among the Prophets of Israel there were some who gave a message including elements that were temporary, and indeed in error, when we read them in the light of the fuller revelation : a conspicuous instance is the denial of a life beyond the grave wherein there is 'remembrance of' God. In the teaching of Zarathushtra we have found no doctrine of religion that needs to be cut away. The greatest of Gentile later Prophets —unless we set Socrates by Gautama's side as his peer—taught the doctrine of reincarnation, and ignored God, which colossal defect necessarily counts as a positive and not a mere negative blot on his system. Our examination of the Gathas has proved—so we venture to claim—that there is nothing to blot out in Zarathushtra's theory. Having made that claim, and adding to it a reminder of the extraordinary depth and truth of his positive doctrine of God, of conduct and of the Hereafter, we shall not be suspected of belittling the pioneer thinker of the Aryan world when we show what was left for other thinkers to unveil.

The primary defects of Zarathushtra's teaching we have already mentioned. There is nothing explicit to call for self-sacrifice. It would have been easy for a successor thoroughly imbued with Zarathushtra's spirit to deduce from his master's life and words the supreme importance of this element. To make the religion a real missionary faith, inspired by the Prophet's own eagerness 'to convert all mankind', it was clearly necessary that enthusiasts should enter the great service, prepared to leave all and follow the gleam. Were Frashaoshtra, Jamaspa, Maidyomaongha, or Ishatvastra the Prophet's son, men who could form a preaching Order like Gautama's earliest followers, like the first Franciscans, like John Wesley's band? We do not know; but if they were, they did not stamp on their Founder's teaching the logical inference which he failed to draw from his own spiritual ambition. Even Hinduism lives by the inspiration of its little band of saints who for the love of God have been ready to forsake earthly happiness. No

such band meets our eye in the history of the Parsi community. We should not count it a defect that the religion refused to bid men practise austerity for its own sake, or with the hope of winning occult power. But it would certainly have made a great difference if the faith of Zarathushtra had been preached to after generations by a succession of men who loved the Truth more than wealth or home or fame, and would give up all these, not to acquire merit but only where the interests of their mission were better served thereby. Paul was no faqir, no pursuer of asceticism as a means of grace. But he did 'one thing'; if anything else came in the way of it he threw it aside. Hence the passion so well expressed in his modern interpreter's words:

> Yes, without cheer of sister or of daughter,
> Yes, without stay of father or of son,
> Lone on the land and homeless on the water
> Pass I in patience till the work be done.

And the inspiration of that utter self-sacrifice has been an even greater power in Christianity than the living letters that teach us the doctrine Paul spent himself to proclaim.

We shall not go far wrong if we link this deficiency with the deficient element in Zarathushtra's doctrine of God. Awe, adoration, obedience, all these could be wakened by the revelation of the Wise Lord. But love—did Zarathushtra *love* Mazdah? True he pleads with him to reveal truth to him 'as friend to friend'.[1] But the Gathas do not develop this thought. The doctrine of immortality sprang, we have seen, from the conviction of the unconquerable Righteousness of God. The saints of Israel won it from their conviction of His Love. It does not need much knowledge of human nature to see how incomparably mightier was this latter force. Even among men, it is written, one will hardly be found to die for the inflexibly just, though perhaps for the good man, one who exhibits the lovable qualities, some will be found ready even to die.[2] Is it fanciful to conjecture that a warmer creed, one

[1] *Ys.* 44[1]. [2] Romans 5[7].

instinct with the love of God, or with that tender sympathy for mankind which is the love of God in another form, might have attracted disciples whose fervid zeal would have made the religion a worldwide power, and not merely the creed of a handful?

Very closely connected with this failure to realize the love of God is the weakness of the doctrine of grace and forgiveness. The question is once asked in the Gathas[1]:

> Where is the recompense for wrong to be found, where pardon for the same? Where shall they attain the Right? Where is holy piety, where Best Thought? Thy Dominions, where are they, O Mazdah?

That is, all these are to be found in the 'Dominions' of Mazdah. The Kingdom of Heaven is the place of repentance and pardon and perfect justice, of devotion and heavenly-mindedness. But how is pardon attained? There is silence to that question. But we know that merits and demerits were weighed inexorably, and the balance, however small, turned the scale for heaven or hell.[2] This principle is so fundamental that it seems impossible to escape the inevitable conclusion. What hope is there for a sinner who repents? Only, it would seem, that he may have time enough allotted him wherein to balance his transgressions with an accumulation of merit. In that case everything will depend on the duration of his respite and the opportunity he gets for gathering merit of adequate weight. On the other side we may have a man who declines from virtue, in whose case salvation depends on his dying before he has exhausted his credit balance. Zarathushtra was so intensely keen upon securing a treasury full of merit, whereby the Good Spirit might win a final victory over the evil, that he overlooked the consequences of the mechanical system he endorsed. That he inherited it, and did not invent it, makes the oversight of so penetrating and practical a thinker less difficult to understand. But in fact what he overlooked was nothing less than the patent truth that to make the fruit good, we must make the tree good. Otherwise we are only

[1] *Ys.* 51[4].

[2] See above, p. 35.

hanging bunches of grapes on a bramble-bush and calling it a vine.

A Zoroastrian might quite fairly reply that it is of the essence of the Founder's system, and even of the later Avestan religion, to lay far the greatest stress on *good thought*. The man must therefore be reformed from within; and the Parsi can honestly claim our Lord's own dictum that 'out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaketh'. That is perfectly true, and we have dwelt on it already as the strong point of the great Prophet's ethical teaching. Parsis have within their own revelation that which should suffice to make them all that their God—or ours—requires of them. 'This do, and thou shalt live.'

'*This do*'—'Ay, there's the rub!' To regulate action is hard; yet good upbringing, a favourable environment, and a healthy ambition have enabled multitudes to win a tolerable success. To set a watch on the lips is far harder; yet here again every decent community imposes sufficient restraint to enable any one who cares for public opinion to avoid the evil generally, and a kindly disposition will produce a crop of positive good words in many lives. But to rule the thoughts—what strength of resolution, what conviction of future reward, what fear of retribution ever availed to bring Thought up to the level which the Gathas themselves imperiously demand when interpreted by the spirit of the Prophet who lays down his law therein? Alas! there is none righteous, no not one!

The demand of Good Thought is very soon seen to bring hopeless confusion into the system based on the weighing of merits and demerits. A good man yields to severe temptation and falls, loses self-respect, sinks lower and lower, and in a very short time dies a moral wreck. On what principle is his judgement based? It may be suspected that when in the ancient Persian court of justice an offender against the king's majesty claimed to be judged on his whole record as provided by the law,[1] the royal judge not infrequently saw his one

[1] See above, p. 36.

offence heavy enough to outweigh a life-time of merit. The Parsi apologist might call in some similar expedient for determining the procedure of the heavenly assize. But surely it must often have happened that no really fair comparison of brief degradation with long-continued virtue could make the scale descend against a man whose fall occurred only a short time before his death. Yet obviously he takes with him into the Unseen a present condition of Evil Thought that makes him no meet inhabitant of the heaven whose name is Vahistem Manah.

The same is true of the reverse case. The history of Christianity is full of broken earthenware miraculously mended. A man who for years has been the vilest of the vile is in a moment transformed, loses the very wish to sin, and spends the rest of his life in a fervour of reparation, saving other men out of the furnace which had so nearly consumed him. Such a case raises problems which we cannot with our knowledge solve. Apply the Zoroastrian test to that member of Barabbas's company of 'patriotic' murderers. Suffering the most barbarous torture that ever man's fiend-like ingenuity devised for his fellow man, the dying dacoit confesses that the cross itself was no more than he deserved. He turns to the spotless Sufferer beside him, and cries from his broken heart, 'Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom'. And instantly the royal word comes back, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise'. Paradise regained by a moment's repentance in midst of mortal pain! Ill had it gone with that malefactor at the Bridge of the Separator, when to balance those murders and atrocities of a blind revolt against constituted authority there was placed in the other scale a cry of anguished repentance, and a recognition of regal Goodness for which even the cross was only the step of an eternal throne. But will the Parsi claim that Jesus was wrong?

In our next chapter we will return to this problem, and ask whether Christianity can answer the hard question which the Parsi inquirer has asked of his Solomon all in vain! It is

probably a prompting of Hindu thought when a Parsi finds a new difficulty in his ancestral eschatology. How can a finite cause produce an infinite effect—the merit of a brief life of virtue be rewarded with bliss in 'endless time'?[1] The difficulty of course affects Christianity even more than Parsism: we have only to return to the case of the Penitent Robber to realize it in an aggravated form. Here it is enough to observe that the difficulty belongs to a larger problem—nothing less than the question whether action (*karma*) or character is to count most among the factors that determine destiny. It is therefore best considered when we come to collect the special enigmas that Zoroastrianism brings to the Sphinx for solution. The insufficiency of Zarathushtra's system to satisfy the obstinate questionings of the mind as to the Hereafter, even among his own followers, is well seen in the powerful attraction so many of them feel for the Hindu doctrine of Reincarnation.[2] However hard it is to square with the clear teaching of their Prophet, they think it necessary to solve a riddle with which the East is permanently oppressed. It is one which Christianity can answer out of her own resources; but as yet she can hardly be said to have made any very serious effort to search among her treasures for what she needs in bringing her Gospel to the lands of the rising sun.

In an authoritative exposition of the initiation ceremony, largely used in our account of the Naojote above,[3] Dr Jivanji Modi says:

> The most important part of these Articles of Faith is that wherein the child is made to believe in the efficacy of one's own good thoughts, good words, and good acts. A Parsee has to believe that for the salvation of his soul he has to look to nobody else, but to himself. Nobody —no priest, or no prophet—will intercede for him. For his salvation he has only to look to the purity of his own thoughts, words, and actions. The pivot on which the whole moral structure of Zoroastrianism turns, rests upon this triad of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

[1] Compare a thoughtful paper by my friend Mr R. F. Gorvala in *Spiegel Memorial Volume*, pp. 99 ff.

[2] See above, pp. 190 ff.

[3] See pp. 160 ff.

> Think of nothing but the truth, speak nothing but the truth, and do nothing but what is proper, and you are saved.[1]

The Christian reader naturally fastens on this as crucial. Different shades of Christians will view it in rather different ways. Members of denominations which have a separated priesthood might criticize the declaration of independence of priest and prophet; and those who recognize no priesthood but that of all believers might applaud the Parsi emancipation. Our earlier description of Parsi ceremonial has made it clear that such inferences would be wholly misleading. Dr Modi, himself a priest, has no intention whatever of suggesting that the worship of the pious Zoroastrian does not need priestly aid:[2] it is as essential as in the Roman communion when Mass is celebrated. But he does lay down, what many Parsis forget—and many Christians—that what is done for us can never dispense with the supreme necessity of working out our own salvation. Yet is that all the truth? Do not those words strike a chill into the hearts of earnest seekers after God who know that what Paul found true is much more true of them? The good that we would we do not, the evil that we hate we practise. The more we know of the lofty requirements of God's law, the less can we attain unto it. We love and yearn for good thoughts, but evil thoughts come unbidden, and will not go away, for all our reasoning. Wretched men that we are—who will deliver us from the body of this death? And to this cry of despair, echoed in the experience of all time, the 'religion of self-assertion'[3] comes with Matthew Arnold's answer:

> Alone, self-poised, hereafter Man
> Must labour, must resign
> His all too human creeds, and scan
> Simply the way divine.

[1] *The Naojote Ceremony* (Bombay, 1914), p. 8.

[2] In a letter received since Dr Moulton's death Dr Modi writes: 'I do say and believe that the worship of a pious Zoroastrian does not need priestly aid.'—J. N. F.

[3] See p. 195.

It is not to be wondered at if soul-hunger has perpetually sought salvation on terms which give poor humanity a brighter hope. Dr Dhalla gives us an account[1] of mystical schools which flourished three centuries ago, and borrowed their theory and practice from Hindu Yogism. The borrowing impulse has been strong in later times. A few years ago there seemed to be some tendency to find the satisfaction of realized need in Christianity. Unhappily this did not last long. India strangely believes that Christianity is a Western religion; and the educated Indian to-day is suffering from an acute attack of nationalism. We who are nationalists ourselves cannot but applaud and wish well to such a movement in the abstract. But India's interests are very badly served when men clamorously assert that she has nothing to learn from outside. It suits some of her interested Western flatterers to make her the chosen home of the spirit, while the rest of the world wallows in materialism. Wiser and truer friends will tell her that no nation lives to itself, that in these days less than ever can we afford to dispense with the fruits of other men's thought and experience. The West receives with gratitude the contributions of India to the world's treasure of thought and poetry: witness the popularity of Tagore. But when the rubbish of occultism is palmed off as the ripe product of Indian thought, the rest of the world shrugs its shoulders and passes on. Unfortunately, for reasons we discussed before, this imposture has not been thoroughly found out in India, and it is still popular as a thoroughly native output.

Largely under this influence, Parsi piety tends to-day to a very eclectic habit. Few finer examples of true religion could be found in India than in the life of the late B. M. Malabari. His magnificent work for womanhood, his inflexibly honest and devoted toil for the highest interests of his country, sprang from the unmistakable inspiration of religion. But though he was a Parsi, it was not his own faith alone, or even mainly, which inspired him. He seemed to have owed

[1] *Zor. Theol.*, pp. 311 ff.

not a little to the higher side of Hinduism, but much more to Christianity. That he had little distinctively Parsi about him is sufficiently shown by the verses his biographer quotes, asking for himself only 'an humble grave' in some wild, to be inscribed with

These three words only—*God be praised.*

He died at Simla (1912), where a Parsi cannot obtain the object of the ordinary Parsi desire, to go to the vultures. But here is a Parsi to whom the thought does not even occur. He describes himself as a 'staunch and sincere Zoroastrian', and we can see the influence of that faith upon his outlook; but the powerful hold of ideas drawn from very different sources is exceedingly obvious to readers of his biography, whether in Mr Karkaria's pages or in those of Mr Jagendra Singh.

The same may be seen in other shining examples of piety among the Parsis. The mixture of creeds is naturally more conspicuous now through the influence of theosophy, which has impressed on the minds of men who love reading and are deeply interested in religion the favourite dogma that all religions are much the same. Typical in many ways is the experience of an able and truly pious professional man who gives hours of every day to devotional reading, meditation, and prayer. He passed through some three years of acute religious conflict. He read the sacred books of the great faiths of the world, and each made its strong appeal to him. But each impulse in turn brought him up against a blank wall. He was convinced that the eternal fravashi entered successive human lives in the environment best suited to its spiritual capacity: his own appointed environment was Zoroastrian, and he could never change it. But he delights to illustrate the Gathas verse by verse out of a very wide range of devotional reading, from Samuel Smiles to the Upanishads. In this spirit he looks at other religions, ready to borrow from them freely, and regarding each as true for those born in them, who are called to make the best of what they inherit.

*Spartam nactus es, hanc exorna*, even if the Sparta be no better than the religious privileges allowed by Hinduism to the 'untouchables'. When the additions to the inherited creed includes an article so far-reaching as reincarnation, it is clear that Zoroastrianism cannot be credited with such a type of piety except as the chief contributor. In this case, however, there is no mistaking the fervour of spiritual life, the real and deep communion with God which the Parsi rites mediate. Nor, on the other hand, is there any question as to the influence of latter-day Parsi doctrine in the exclusion of all missionary feeling, the deliberate leaving of mankind to struggle on with what it has. Eclectic and exclusive, Parsi piety thinks it less blessed to give than to receive.

There is of course religion of a simpler and more old-fashioned sort, especially among women. A successful Parsi barrister, who became a Roman Catholic thirty years ago, during visits to France in the Cambridge Long Vacation, told of his mother's prayers, to which he believed he owed his own soul. She would keep the prayers of the midnight watch regularly, and so fervent was she in her faith that her son deferred during her lifetime his open confession of Christianity. She prayed better than she knew! How much of this kind of piety there is among the Parsis it is naturally impossible to estimate. It is to be feared that there is much less than there used to be. Thinking Parsis are generally rather pessimist about the religious condition of their people; and the prospects of a revival are far from bright. The sympathetic onlooker cannot escape a profound doubt whether the religion contains a dynamic which might bring revival. Parsi seekers after God are in a very similar case to those who in the Roman imperial age turned eagerly to every new Eastern cult that seemed to offer warmth and light. Their own ancestral religion was cold at best, and now was dead. The new worship of the State was no religion at all, and philosophy only offered to satisfy the mind. Heart-hunger welcomed orgiastic cults from the East, and would not stay to ask if these wild frenzies

had a real fire behind them or only a fitful semblance that would soon die down. To such 'deep weariness' came the Gospel that satisfied every need. The question of questions for a people in like condition to-day is whether the pride of a great inheritance will still hold them back from accepting the logical outcome of their oldest and purest revelation, the Gospel which comes not to destroy but to fulfil.

# CHAPTER 7

## THE PARSIS AND CHRISTIAN PROPAGANDA

God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son.

THE foregoing study of a great and ancient religion will have served to prove that Zoroastrianism differs essentially from all other non-Christian creeds in that its fundamental documents set forth a system which calls for supplement, but nowhere includes what is untrue or unworthy. This being so, we may clearly borrow the title of Dr Farquhar's well-known book and apply it with still greater confidence. For if Christianity is the 'Crown of Hinduism', in spite of all the falsenesses and the foulnesses which so seriously choke its aspirations and destroy its capacity for higher things, much more must it be the crown of the religion of Zarathushtra in which Christ has nothing to destroy and only everything to fulfil.

This being so, it is deeply disappointing to find that so little has been done to achieve this fulfilment. To a very large extent the Parsis have been left alone by Christian Missions. A conspicuous and recent indication of this was to be seen in their deliberate exclusion from the field surveyed in the World's Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. The Report on 'The Missionary Message', one of the ablest and most illuminating works in missionary literature,

never mentioned Zarathushtra or the Parsis; nor was the defect allowed to be made good in discussion. The Parsis are a very small community, and have proved extremely difficult to win. The total resources of Christian Missions in men and money being limited — we may conceive the Edinburgh leaders arguing—it is wasteful to lavish them on the few, with small prospect of return. The Parsis will turn to Christ when India's public opinion has declared for Him. It is hard to plead against the conclusions of the highest missionary statesmanship, taken after well-informed and impartial survey of the field as a whole. And yet, when we turn from counting to weighing, and realize what the Parsis, once convinced, can be for the cause of the Kingdom of Christ in India, we cannot accept the decision without a sigh. Going to the Parsis is strikingly like the Apostles' going to the Jews. Paul himself continued to go to the Synagogue first, even after he knew by hard experience how sure it was to bring danger to his work and his life. He went there to win 'workers for the great employ'. Judaism was a religion that only needed supplement: an earnest Jew, once convinced that He to whom the Prophets witnessed had come in the lowly Carpenter, was prepared by ages of training to go forth immediately and do the errand of his King. The Parsis in India seem to have a very similar claim on the loving persuasiveness of the Christian teacher. Their Prophet points unmistakably to Bethlehem. 'He that shall save' was adored by their own priests at His first coming. To countless millions of Hindu villagers, whose religion is in the main idolatry and superstition, even if it be not degrading devil-worship, the Parsi might come with a message of holiness and hope. We have to convince him that he is his brother's keeper, and that without weakening his conviction that God spoke to Zarathushtra he may accept the further revelation that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. If he can only realize that, the treasures of his ancient faith will not be cast away as dross: they will be thankfully brought as an offering to Him who prizes, more than we can

understand, every effort of the human spirit to grope its way towards the Kingdom of God.

Efforts to win the Parsis for Christ began with the mission of Dr Wilson, founder of the great Christian College which keeps his name familiar in Bombay. John Wilson, F.R.S., was one of the giants of missionary story. Elderly Parsis who remember him agree in speaking of the universal regard and affection which the Parsis came to feel towards him in the later part of his career. They say that at first he was a very polemical missionary, and raised bitter hostility to himself and his religion. Ultimately he came to realize that this attitude was doing more harm than good, devoted himself to educational and philanthropic work, and did more for the cause of Christianity by his personal charm and his untiring zeal in doing good than he had ever done by his fiery attacks on Parsi religion. This is not difficult to believe, for his published controversial writings are extremely fierce. We shall ask presently whether the attitude of this great scholar and missionary is really so inconsistent as it seems with the very different line ventured in this book. About the personal influence of Wilson there is in any case no question. A beautiful appreciation of his saintliness and benevolence is given in that little masterpiece, Mr Jogendra Singh's life of Malabari. The one sure way of Christian propaganda was illustrated powerfully in him:

> The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life;
> And he that is wise winneth souls.[1]

For 'winning souls' is a bigger thing than ever baptisms can measure; and we may be sure that many a Parsi who saw Christ reflected in John Wilson entered the Unseen prepared, like Saul by the sight of Stephen, to recognize and adore the Face that shines unveiled on the other side.

The earliest converts to Protestant Christianity were two youths who were baptized by Dr Wilson in May 1839.

[1] Proverbs $11^{30}$.

A little book is before the writer, containing a sermon of some fifteen thousand words preached by the great missionary on that memorable occasion, and appendices describing the sequel.[1] One of the two boys, Dhanjibhai Naoroji, was destined to live a long life of Christian service as a minister of the Church which Dr Wilson adorned, and to pass to his place in the House of Song only nine years ago. His fellow-Parsis —for he stoutly declared himself a Parsi to the last—had none but admiring and affectionate tributes to lay upon his grave. The little autobiographical sketch which he was with great difficulty persuaded to write at the end of his life is a most winsome portrait of a convert who would have sufficiently justified Wilson's missionary career had he never made another.[2]

Dhanjibhai's work in his own country was very fruitful, though there is little to show that he was able to persuade many Parsis to follow him. The cost was fearful; and, with all their virtues, Parsis are not trained by their religion in the qualities that make martyrs. In these days the Parsi community will speak plenty of daggers but use none, if a member dares to follow conscience and bear the Treasure of the Magi along the Bethlehem road. It was not so a generation ago. There were three boys in Wilson's school who together accepted their Saoshyant and resolved on baptism. One of

[1] The Doctrine of Jehovah addressed to the Parsis. A Sermon preached on the occasion of the baptism of two youths of that tribe, May 1839. With supplemental and illlustrative Documents. By John Wilson, D.D., F.R.S., Honorary President of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, and Missionary of the Free Church of Scotland. Third edition, Edinburgh, 1847.

My copy has an interesting inscription on its fly-leaf:

> To Dear Mr & Mrs Wimbush, a token of Christian affection and esteem fondly cherished towards them by one of the 'two' first Parsi converts mentioned in this book, who, quarter of a century ago, became, amidst persecutions and privations, 'the firstfruits' of the Parsi Nation unto Christ, in full realization of Phil. i. 29, Rom. v. 3, Gal. vi. 14.
>
> Barnet, 12/2/64. HORMAZDJI PESTONJI.

[2] *From Zoroaster to Christ* (Edinburgh, Oliphant, 1909). There is an introduction and an epilogue by another great Christian educationalist, Dr Mackichan, who has succeeded Wilson not only in the care of his College, but in his primacy of influence in the city of Bombay.

them was carried away by his relatives and never attained the goal. The others passed veritably through the fire. Their lives and that of Wilson himself were in peril. The law was unsuccessfully invoked to drag them out of Wilson's keeping: they were pronounced to be of age, and of their own free will, before the High Court and a large and angry crowd, they declared their choice of him as their guardian. An even fiercer ordeal was passed by Sorabji, whose family to-day stands out among the leading Christians of India. The manner of his conversion was very remarkable. At a Mission school he had been reported to the Head Master for a prank played upon an Indian member of the staff. Little realizing, perhaps, what his inspiration was to bring in its train, the master substituted a Gospel for the cane, and set the boy down to read the Sermon on the Mount. One, two hours passed, and at last the master asked the boy whether he was not going home. 'Not without the book,' he replied. He took it home, and the silent page wrought as it has so often wrought in its eighteen centuries in all parts of the world. Sorabji had to be sheltered in police barracks, and never went out without an armed guard. Once a message came from his mother—she was dying and called for him. She met him on the stairs as he ran into the house, and told him to fly for his life. He ran into a Parsi mob and a posse of police at the same moment. On another occasion a Begum next door overheard the servants talking of a present of sweets that had come for Sorabji. She intercepted it and gave one to a dog, which fell dead. Adventures like these will help to show why converts were rare in those days. A community that has so conspicuously marched in the van of progress naturally does not use those carnal weapons now. But the public opinion of a proud and intensely exclusive people has other methods of making itself felt. When Miss Gulbai Vakil, of the Settlement for University Women in Bombay, fled to Christ from the tyranny of the Vendidad, she was admonished by the High Priest that she would 'make her life most unhappy in

this world as well as in the next'. The prophecy has not fulfilled itself in this case: a happy home with new friends has justified once more the Lord's promise to those who left all for Him. But few are made of stern enough material to regard with courage the severance of such strong ties.

There seems to be something in the Parsi mind which makes it peculiarly difficult to drive home the claim of Him to whom the Iranian Prophet so truly bore witness. Dr Dhalla assures the writer that not twenty-five Parsis since Wilson's day have embraced Christianity. It would be difficult to check the statement, but there are no conspicuous facts to refute it. He told of his attending the meetings for students held by Dr John R. Mott in Bombay. Under the appeal of a man so manly and persuasive, a great many students gave their names as willing to study the Bible. The Dastur noticed a dozen or more Parsi students putting down their names, and went to look after his flock. He was assured that he need not trouble—the names and addresses were purely imaginary.

Dr Dhalla's estimate of the success of Christian propaganda among Parsis in the last generation may be compared with the experience of Christian characters who have for many years brought powerful influence to bear upon these people. Miss Dobson, of the University Settlement, Bombay, writes thus:

> My own firm conviction is that at the present moment the Parsis are more hardened than they have ever been towards Christianity, the reason being that most of the most active spiritual desire has been diverted into Theosophy. This has taken place because there was a certain amount of genuine desire after truth, and a certain amount of soul-hunger, but those who became Christians had such a hard time of it that the others who might have been willing to follow felt that the path was too hard, and therefore chose a course which to some extent satisfied their cravings, and which did not force them to deny the Zoroastrian faith; it was in fact the easier path and so they followed it.
>
> I know that at present there is a great deal of philanthropy going on and at the present time the ladies are indefatigable in war-work, &c., but as far as spiritual desire goes, I feel that it is at a low ebb. Many have studied the Bible, and their knowledge instead of benefiting them,

has seemed to harden them, as is always the case when people reject truth.

We have already suggested some reasons why the Parsi mind has proved hard ground for the reception of the seed of the Kingdom. Before attempting further analysis, it will be well to listen to Parsi witnesses. No weightier could be called than Malabari, whose was so specially the *anima naturaliter Christiana*. The following remarks on the question can be trusted from him:

> It hardly seems to be in the nature of things that Christianity can gain on the subtle Indian intellect. As a race, we have little impulse or emotion in a matter like this; and thus what is readily accepted by the exquisitely-nerved European, as the direct instance of revelation, with us sinks into a burst of pure fanaticism. *Faith*, which precedes and supersedes *thought* with the devout Christian, and which has been, from time to time, working magically on the most sublime intellects of the West, seldom actuates the heart of the proud Asiatic, who strives to purchase salvation with *work*, and never stoops to accept it as alms, as it assuredly would be if faith were to be his only merit. Still, it must be borne in mind, that all human work falls short in this as in every other case.[1]

Christians would agree that even Malabari has not penetrated below the surface of the Christian doctrine of Faith. But the balancing is so fine that an Eastern reader might well declare Malabari to be condemning the Indian habit of mind, and wistfully pronouncing the European in the right.

The hindrances that bar the short and easy road from Zarathushtra to Christ are briefly summed up in the everywhere-observed fact that the good is the enemy of the best. The Parsis are hard to win for reasons not unlike those that account for the stubbornness of the Jews, to whom they are parallel in many ways. Both look back with unlimited reverence to a very great prophet standing at the earliest dawn of their national religious history. Both have overlaid the teaching of their Founders with a mass of later accretions

[1] Quoted in R. P. Karkaria, *India: Forty Years of Progress and Reform* (London, Henry Frowde, 1896).

of ritual, which in practice though not in theory put the moral and spiritual side of the original faith altogether into a subordinate place. Asked the old question, 'Which is the first commandment in the Law?' the Jew has always answered with fervour in the words of the Deuteronomic Moses, and set in its right place the doctrine of the unity of God and the supreme duty of love to Him and to the neighbour. To the same question the Parsi has always returned unfalteringly the great triad of Good Thought, Good Word, Good Deed, as comprising the whole duty and the promised reward of men. But all the Jewish emphasis on the *Shema* did not silence the note of anxiety in the eager question of a Scribe whose heart had been touched by One who spoke with manifest authority. And when he got from Jesus the answer he had hoped, he showed clearly enough that 'whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices' were very real rivals in the system taught by his fellow Scribes, with whom indeed 'the tradition of men' had come to outweigh all 'the commandments of God'.[1]

One thing these ritualists have held fast from their origins. The Founder's figure in both alike has attained a very unhistorical but uniquely dignified position, and he is confidently credited with Talmud, with Vendidad, and all manner of religious trifling. His very greatness becomes the colossal barrier that stays his adorers from pursuing the path down which his outstretched hand is pointing. The Moses of Deuteronomy foretold the coming of another and a greater Prophet in his succession. The Zarathushtra of the Later Avesta points to a 'Future Saviour'. But those who adore their memory refuse to hear. 'We know that God spoke to Moses; but as for this man, we know not whence he is.' And yet it is 'this Man' who can open the eyes of the blind!

Self-satisfaction is often observed to be the weak spot of the Parsi. He is rightly proud of his past, and the splendour of his Prophet. But he cannot realize that only a very small part of everyday Parsi religion has any relation to Zara-

[1] Mark $12^{33}$, $7^{8}$.

thushtra; nor does he see that Zarathushtra's greatness is no reason for closing the eyes to the probability that God may have something more to say to men. The spell of the Past is on him. And indeed it is a high duty to remember the canonized Past.

> Take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget,

is the Recessional that God's voice repeats to us when the pageant of the Past has swept by. But if our first duty to the Past is to remember, our second duty is to forget. Forgetting the things that are behind, we are to stretch eagerly forward to the things that are before, and press on to the goal for the prize of God's 'upward calling'.[1] The only true loyalty to the Past is to recognize the superior claim of the Future, and yield to 'the Powers of the Time to Come'.

Alas! the very symbolism of the sacred garment that the Parsi wears as the seal of his religion bids him turn his back upon the Future![2] His Founder lived in it. The Golden Age was yet to come, and all the eager missionary's ambition was to be among 'Those who make this world advance'[3] towards it. With the modesty of the great, he sets himself among others who are to be with him the Future Deliverers.[4] Are we not justified in claiming that Zarathushtra knew he himself could never finish the work he had so splendidly begun? And did not the Mobeds of old take the right turning when they made their way to Bethlehem in their quest for the Supreme Fulfiller of their Prophet's ideal?

To a certain extent, the modern Parsi will go with them. If he is a really religious man, he will gladly endorse the action of the Roman Emperor who wanted to place a statue of Jesus in the Pantheon. That of course is an attitude very familiar in non-Christian countries, and especially in India. Thousands of educated Hindus to-day are reading the Gospels

[1] Philippians $3^{14}$. [2] See above, p. 162. [3] *Ys.* $30^{9}$.
[4] See the passages for Saoshyant in the plural, above, pp. 43, 102.

with reverent wonder, and giving Christ a high place—sometimes even the highest place—among the Great Ones. We can welcome it, as a step towards something far beyond; but it is hardly necessary to say that if we were to bate one jot of the unique claim the Universal Church has always made for 'our Lord and our God', we should emasculate our Gospel and make it one which would not repay the missionary's self-sacrifice, or satisfy the deep needs which brought the convert up the arduous way.

With the Parsi, of course, the whole matter is concentrated on the precedence of Zarathushtra. Sometimes he will annex Christian terms for his. Even as Ceylon Buddhists set themselves to emend Charles Wesley in a somewhat novel form:

O for a thousand tongues to sing
Our holy Buddha's praise!

so has a Parsi compiled an anthology called 'The Imitation of Zoroaster'.

The position of Parsis towards Jesus is so important for the right understanding of our missionary problem that it should be illustrated more fully. In the first place it will be helpful to quote in full a statement appended to the Gujarati edition of the writer's Bombay lectures, *The Teaching of Zarathushtra*. The translator, Dr Jehangir K. Daji, is an orthodox Parsi who belonged to the Theosophical Society but left it some thirty years ago.[1]

[1] The statement is given in Dr Daji's own English. He sent it me that I might approve of it before it went out of my range in an unknown language.

'The terms Christ and Christian have a deeper meaning for people holding views like my own than that attached to it by the Christian world and supposed to be the historical one. The said historical interpretation of the term appears to us to be a material one in comparison with what the deeper and spiritual meaning we attach to it and which we believe to be the actual interpretation that the great apostle St. Paul had in mind when he represented Christ as the only saviour of humanity. Our interpretation may not be acceptable to the Christian world at large, but it has been the favourite interpretation of some great souls born and bred in the Christian faith who have been designated gnostics and mystics.

'According to what we believe to be the deeper and more spiritual inter-

The comment that was received by Dr Daji for inclusion with his own observations is the only one necessary here, unless it be well to point out the theosophical origin of this adaptation of the name 'Christ'. The adaptation is perhaps somewhat open to the attack of the scoffer who quotes:

'When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean.'

But so long as no one of the uninformed gets the idea that the

pretation, the term Christian means one who follows Christ *in spirit*, by striving in right earnest to understand the Christ-Spirit, live the Christ-Life, and realize the Christ-Power. By Christ is meant the Divinity that works in man, and shapes his destiny for good by directing him Godward.

'The term Jesus-Christ expresses the identity or at-one-ment of the perfect man Jesus who had identified himself with Christ, and the Divinity in man known as Christ.

'The divinity known as Christ in Christianity has been recognized as *Vohu Manangha* in Zoroastrianism and as Buddha in Buddhism. The monopoly of the word Christ does not confer upon professed Christian Churches and communities the exclusive right to communion with the Divinity in man called Christ.

'It is true that Jesus having realized Christ became a saviour of mankind by pointing out to others the divinity within them and showing them the way of life or rule of conduct that may lead them to God. But there have been other Saviours besides Jesus, as for instance Zoroaster, who realized as Vohu-Manangha what Jesus realized as Christ and yearned to approach God the Father, named by him Mazda Ahura, and *did* approach him.

'I hold that in our way to God, it is the life of Right Thought, Right Speech, and Right Action that counts, and not the profession of one faith or another, nor the baptismal ceremony of one kind or another. A nominal Zoroastrian does not become a true Christian by mere going through the ceremony of baptism for admission into a Christian faith, nor can a nominal Christian become a true Zoroastrian by mere going through the Navjot ceremony.

'The radical difference between the orthodox Christian and the orthodox Zoroastrian point of view is that the former considers the case of Jesus to be unique, whereas the latter considers that of Zoroaster to be so. From that radical difference spring up a variety of differences in belief and practice which need not be discussed in the present commentary. On one point, we two have agreed: while fully understanding that we differ on a touchy point, a point keenly felt and deeply cherished by both of us, we agree not only to tolerate, but also to appreciate an honest difference of opinion, frankly and unreservedly expressed.'

(I ought perhaps to add that my friend has quite rightly stated in the last paragraph the difference between us. But Christians would accept heartily the second paragraph above. We should wish to add, as most certainly would Paul, that this 'Christ' is Jesus Christ, the Man of Nazareth in His heavenly life.—J. H. M.)

Greek word *Χριστός* could possibly have this meaning for its original readers, or the Hebrew term *Messiah* from which it is translated, no great harm is done. Probably Dr Daji would have done better to apply another Christian term, the Logos, to represent his conception of the 'Divine Spark in all of us', as he expressed it in conversation: it would not be accepted by the Christian exegete as correct historically, but it would be nearer the meaning. He urges that every nation has a Logos, a Divine help, in one who fully realizes this Divine element within us, as Jesus and Zarathushtra did. One sentence he used in discussion might seem to suggest what lies nearer to our view. He spoke of the Gospels as presenting us with the perfect Son of God, the Gathas as showing us the way thither.

This kind of attitude is naturally not exactly represented among the Reformers. But the uniqueness of Christ is as much a stumbling-block on this side as on the other. With their confessed affinities to Unitarian doctrine, the Parsi Reforming party will lay stress on the classing of Jesus with other Prophets, and the denial of His supremacy is taken for granted. It is actually easier for the Reformer to make Zarathushtra the equal or superior of Jesus, for he can go back to the Gathas, and disencumber himself of the later texts which are so difficult to defend.

To Parsis of all shades the Cross presents the same kind of difficulty that it does in India generally among men wholly interpenetrated by the Indian view. It may well be partly the fault of Christian theorizing. The Doctrine of the Atonement, as taught in the popular theology, and even by missionaries like Wilson himself, presents difficulties enough to the thoughtful Christian, who cannot help being seriously troubled by the air of unreality in which it is too commonly enveloped. How much greater must be the difficulty of Eastern thinking men, to whom the presuppositions are new and strange, which for the inheritor of centuries of Christianity are easily assumed! The difficulties are mostly outside the New Testament, which

contains all the materials for the building up of a doctrine far more capable of solving an Indian's problems—naturally very different from those that appeal to the West. Professor A. G. Hogg once very suggestively dwelt on the contrast between the Oriental's preoccupation with the chain of cause and effect, and that of the citizen of the Roman Empire with rebellion against Divine sovranty. Paul's doctrine of an indwelling Saviour, as the source of a new life, is much more likely to help the Indian—and the British!—mind than all the elaborate forensic systems that the Middle Ages laboured out. To this we will return.

# CHAPTER 8

## THE CROWN OF ZOROASTRIANISM

I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

WE are at last ready to turn to Christianity and examine its answer to the questions raised by the ancient religion we have been studying. Since Wilson's day there has been extremely little research in Parsi books and among Parsi people from the standpoint of Christian missionary aims. It seems incumbent on us to compare our general results with those of the great pioneer. Any one who gets hold of Wilson's *Parsi Religion*,[1] and gives even a cursory reading to its very learned, very earnest, and very prolix pages, will see at once that there is an immense difference between Wilson's estimate of the religion and that which is set forth in this book. The essence of the difference, however, admits of a very simple explanation. Wilson gives no evidence that he ever read the Gathas: the student who takes up Wilson's task after three-quarters of a century is only reluctantly compelled to read anything else. Wilson sternly refuses to allow Zarathushtra the title of Prophet, and will hardly give his religion

[1] The Parsi Religion as contained in the Zand-Avasta, and propounded and defended by the Zoroastrians of India and Persia, unfolded, refuted, and contrasted with Christianity. By John Wilson, D.D., M.R.A.S. Bombay, American Mission Press, 1843, pp. 474. With appendices of 136 pages, including translations of Zartusht-Namah (Eastwick), &c.

credit for a single pure truth or lofty thought of God. If to-day we thought of Zarathushtra as the author of the Vendidad, and knew as little as Wilson did of the Gathas, we should say nearly the same. We do not come to the study of other religions in the spirit which prevailed in those days. Comparative Science has forced us to read documents with impartial diligence, to understand them rather than to refute them. And the Christian Religion, which is always bringing out of its treasury things new as well as old, has reiterated its testimony that God never left Himself without witness; and men recognize that once more Science and Religion can agree. There are few Christian thinkers now who would grudge the title of Prophet to the author of the Gathas. But neither Science nor Religion consents to trace a Prophet's hand in the Vendidad. It is not necessary to condemn outright with Wilson's fervour a book such as priests have composed, and love to compose, in every country. But the writer frankly admits that even if as a philologist he had ploughed up this prairie to collect Aryan roots, much as members of his craft may study the Iguvine Tables, or even the Brahmanas, he would never have been likely to turn from such study to inquire into Avestan religion. The Gathas were the compelling motive; and it is on the Gathas that he bases his optimist estimate of the heritage of Zarathushtra. In Wilson's day it was hardly possible to read the Gathas so as to appreciate their religious value. If they were a sealed book to so good a scholar as Wilson, they were still more so to the great majority of the Parsis. In spite of all that has been done in the last two generations to clear up their meaning, it cannot be said that the Parsis even now have any familiarity with the Hymns which in theory stand at the centre of their religion. Even if accurately translated, they are highly elusive; and the shallow easiness of the Later Avesta assures it of an unchallenged supremacy in practice. The people collectively worship the Gathas, but it is the Vendidad that makes their religion. *Probitas laudatur et alget*; Zarathushtra

is not the only Prophet in history who has been hailed as Lord by those who do not the things he says!

Wilson followed a true instinct therefore when he concentrated on the Vendidad, if the right way of Christian propaganda is to attack the weak spots of the religion we strive to supersede. There are some central points of his attack in which advance of knowledge shows that he was mistaken. Eternity (Zervan Akarana) never had among Parsis, except with sectarians, the primacy that Wilson argued from; and the thorough-going Dualism which he inferred, while no doubt accordant with some sides of Magian theology, cannot fairly be credited to the religion as a whole. We have tried to show[1] that even if the creative power allowed the Ahriman justifies the use of the term Dualism, the more serious implications of it are precluded by the emphasis with which later Zoroastrianism reiterates the Founder's teaching of the utter destruction that awaits Evil in the end.

'Thou shouldst be living at this hour—we have need of thee' is a cry enlightened Parsis might well address to the Fravashi of John Wilson. His affectionate interest in them originally prompted even the provocative and not always fair attacks he delivered against their cherished beliefs. When he realized a more excellent way, and left polemics alone, he won a place in their heart that no other man has secured. If a Christian missionary with a firstborn's portion of his spirit, and with the same gifts of scholarship, were to settle in Bombay to-day, we can form some conception of the line he would take for the winning of the Parsis. The open avowal of his supreme object would be no obstacle; a sympathetic attitude towards things held sacred, and a rigid abstinence from harshness and violence, would ensure a respectful hearing; and then the personal force of a life like Wilson's would exercise a silent influence. The radical difference in method, according with the newer spirit in Christian missionary effort, would turn on a preference to begin with the other end of the

[1] See p. 107.

Avesta. The first and greatest of Christian missionaries prompts us by his example to search for every element in a non-Christian religion which can be claimed as true, and set in the light of the Teacher who came not to destroy but to fulfil. Epimenides had said 'In Thee we live and move and have our being'; Aratus and Cleanthes had echoed the thought centuries later, declaring 'For we are also His offspring'. From such great thoughts Paul starts, pleads with his 'very devout' hearers that idolatry was unworthy of their own highest teaching, and hurries on to the Gospel which his frivolous audience would not wait to receive. The Gathas contain a far more pure and thorough-going monotheism than Greek thinkers could ever attain, hampered as they were by an inherited polytheistic Olympus as unmoral as the pantheon of Hinduism. Surely the first thing to be done is to bring the Parsis back to the Gathas, and from these Scriptures preach to them Jesus! The object of this book has been very imperfectly attained if it has not been realized that the Teaching of Zarathushtra is truly on the way to Him. Wilson passionately declaimed against Avestan polytheism. Our analysis has shown that the indictment comes dangerously near the truth, and we should admit the same to be true wherever we found Christians who allowed themselves to pay to saint or angel honour due to the Triune God alone. But the Parsi's first safeguard against polytheism lies in his own Prophet's doctrine. Help him to see how central is the emphasis Zarathushtra laid on the Oneness of God, whose unity in diversity is taught in the great six Attributes that are inseparably part of His nature. The lesson has been penetrating the mind of the people since Wilson's day, though there is still much to be done. The fervour with which Parsi apologists deny that they give to Yazads, or to the Fire, the kind of worship that they offer to Ahura Mazdah, is itself witness that they are nearer to us than perhaps their own books justify. It may be possible enough, by strict exposition of later Avestan texts, to show that the reproach is not so

easily rolled away. Why should we labour such a point? To pin the Parsi down to historical accuracy here is only like urging points of Higher Criticism in a Christian sermon, which should be too busy with first things to spare time for the secondary. If the Parsi does strain the interpretation of the Later Avesta in his eagerness to reconcile it with Zarathushtra's authoritative doctrine, ought not we to be simply thankful? We have only to remember that the Gathas are for him decisive, and where their teaching is plain the later books, being also sacred, must be interpreted in harmony with them. It is after all just the line that was taken till our own generation by Christian orthodoxy about Old Testament doctrine which conflicted with the New. Nor should we forget that our poor opinion of the Vendidad ought not to take us too far in depreciation of the Magian religion. The Magi were the depositaries of the Treasure that was accounted worthy to be laid at the feet of Christ; and if they had that treasure in earthen vessels, they preserved it well enough to merit our gratitude. To our regret that Wilson knew nothing of the preciousness of the Gathas we cannot but add our wonder that he did not use in his earnest pleading with the Parsis the matchless story of the Magi who followed the gleam and found their Lord and ours.

From this point of view then let us scan afresh the leading doctrines of Parsi religion, and see how they look in the light of Christianity. And first the doctrine of God. Our earlier study showed that His *unity* was taught by Zarathushtra with the utmost emphasis, and that he added the most valuable corollary of diversity within the unity. So far the doctrine is remarkably parallel with that of the Old Testament. The relation of Aramaiti to Mazdah strikingly resembles that of Wisdom to Yahweh in *Proverbs*. Phrases like that in which 'Mercy and Truth' are united, 'Righteousness and Judgement', God's 'Favour' and 'Life', bring the conceptions of the Ameshaspands before us. Light, Truth, Holiness, and Wisdom are scarcely more prominent in the Old Testament

than they are in the Hymns. There is a great psalm of adoration in our hymn-books, in which Jew and Parsi might join without misgiving — Oliver Wendell Holmes's 'Lord of all being, throned afar'. The conspicuous use of fire and sun in its imagery suits Parsi thought typically. But while a Parsi could accept it, one doubts whether a Parsi could have written it, at any rate from inspirations of his own sacred books. The line,

Whose light is Truth, whose warmth is Love,

combines with a characteristically Zoroastrian idea,[1] one that is at home in Israel but not in Iran. The thought of God as before all things the power of Love was in the background in the earlier stages of Israel's progress, when the most vital necessity was to learn the ethical holiness for which Deity stood in the revelation of Israel's prophets. But it mounts up in the heavens as the ages pass, and long before the end of the Old Testament age it is the sun among the stars, for those elect souls who made the religion of Israel significant for mankind. Thus was the New Covenant prepared for, wherein Love reigns alone, a Power not weakly forgiving or ready to tolerate wrong-doing. It is the sternest and most awful of all God's attributes, for it is the champion of every member of God's family, and the infinite tenderness towards the sufferer of wrong is on its other side appalling wrath towards him who has sinned against the family tie.

Zarathushtra's passionate belief in divine justice brings him near to the realization of that tenderness which the prophets of Israel contemplate till it became the supreme inspiration of the national piety. There are great possibilities in the closing phrase of the *Honover*, telling how Mazdah set the Prophet to be 'shepherd of the poor'. The twenty-third Psalm, and even beyond it the tenth chapter of John, show to what the figure might grow. The traditional rendering even lost the

[1] Compare the fine phrase in Porphyry, that the body of Oramazdes was like light, and his soul like truth.

figure outright, though it is the only really clear and simple phrase in the stanza. Christianity comes in to show *how* 'God so loved the world'. That Zarathushtra's doctrine of God was seriously deficient here is illustrated well by the changed atmosphere of the Later Avesta. The cold, pure splendour of Ahura Mazdah, the dim abstractness of Asha and Vohu Manah, gave their opportunity to the old gods, who were so much like human beings, and in consequence so much more intelligible. Mithra in the Yashts covers the field which Zarathushtra put in charge of Asha—no archangel, but a veritable Person within the Deity. John Bunyan might have made Asha live: Zarathushtra certainly did not. No wonder the vivid mythological figure of Mithra came back to his throne. Experience shows that the worship of saints and angels always comes in when men have lost from their conception of God those features by which He may be known and loved. There is the supreme justification of the Incarnation. To see the glory of God in the face of a Man made like to us, whom we can picture truly, though never completely, for ourselves in a form we understand, makes us able to realize God's goodness; and that is the one great need of man. Men plead like Moses for a vision of God's glory, but we can never see that and live. So He makes all His goodness pass before us.

No fable old, nor mythic lore,
  Nor dream of bards and seers,
No dead fact stranded on the shore
  Of the oblivious years;—

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
  A present help is He;
And faith has still its Olivet,
  And love its Galilee.

And when we want to convince men that it is wrong to give to angels or saints the kind of reverence we give to God, our surest road of persuasion is not the denunciation of the wrong but the presentation of the right. We can show that God

needs no intermediaries, and bids us come straight to Him. He uses His angels and glorified saints—His Yazads and Frohars—to 'do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation'. But He Himself will give those servants His commands. We do not consider it good manners to order the servants about when we are staying in a friend's house; we go to the master or mistress with our request for what we need. Even so the New Testament bids us come straight to Him who joins in Himself absolutely all that has ever been claimed for any other intercessor. Men think the Great God too remote for our understanding—a mystery of awe and holiness too incomprehensible for us to approach. So they come back to old familiar figures, majestic and mighty beyond the range of human rivalry, but still sufficiently like us to give us confidence and make our prayer an intelligent appeal to beings we can understand. And Christianity takes us, not to a semi-human figure imagined by poetic fancy to move in the Light or the Waters, but to a Man, like ourselves in all but our faults and our limitations, who actually walked our earth and gives us in the undimmed mirror of His perfect life a picture of God's goodness that the little child can run to, and the wisest and the greatest kneel to adore.

Men cry, like those Radhasoami priests,[1] that they need a living voice. The Prophets of the past, Zarathushtra, Gautama, Socrates, lived and died long ages since. They spoke to generations that are dead and gone, in tongues that are archaic and obscure. The learned wrangle over the translation of their words; and when the words are clear they often fail to illuminate the problem that perplexes us in practical needs to-day. We believe that their spirit lives on, and will live, and that echoes of their voice can reach us, borne dimly and imperfectly out of a dark remoteness in which they dwell with God and wait for us to join them. But oh! we want a living voice of authority that will clear up the question of

[1] See p. 199.

conduct that presses for instant decision, or solve the obstinate questioning of our mind that drives us into negation and despair. Zarathushtra is great and good and wise, but he is far, far away. And lo! we are on a snow-clad mountain-top, and it is night. But out of the darkness there breaks an excellent glory and we see the great old saints of other days. Moses and Elijah, Zarathushtra and Gautama and Mahavira, Socrates and Plato, Kabir and Ramanuja—our eager eyes gaze on the faces of the wise and saintly, and we know that it is good to be here. But as we wait for words that shall open to us all the mysteries, there comes a luminous cloud and overshadows them, and a great fear enwraps us as they enter into the cloud and our hopes fade with them. But from the cloud there sounds a Voice, 'This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him'. And when the cloud is passed, Jesus is found alone. They have vanished again into that high heaven where all our holy Dead abide, inaccessible to us until the great Reunion Day. He alone ever liveth to make intercession for us, and to speak God's own 'To-day' into our souls, a message and a mercy that is new every morning.

Nor do we follow cunningly devised fables, or plead as evidence an unsubstantial vision of long ago. That the voice of Jesus sounds to-day, that He is a Real Presence abiding with us in home and street and office and school, is a Gospel preached to us by the first believers out of their own heart's experience, and confirmed to us by all the ages and the sure knowledge of our own soul. Does the outsider wistfully ask how he may know that all this is not a delusion, that men have not fashioned a comforting Gospel out of their desperate wish to believe? 'If thou seekest witness, look around thee.' It is not eighteen centuries since mighty wonders and signs attended them that believed. Men and women have taken this Real Presence with them into the wild places of the earth where are the habitations of cruelty. No Force attended them to guard their lives, and many times those lives were gladly laid down. But a Power that no science can explain

tamed the very cannibal and uplifted him, dragged him out of darkness into a wonderful light. All the world over these miracles are being wrought to-day. It is vain to say that the name of Christ is professed by multitudes who shame humanity by crime and greed and war. Christ is author of eternal salvation to those that obey Him. His precepts are there in the Book, His Spirit speaks with no uncertain voice in the soul; and He claims a verdict from the consciences of men only on what He has clearly ordained. We do not condemn Zarathushtra from what Nietzsche put in his mouth. We cannot proclaim Christianity a failure on what is only the outcome of disobeying its teaching. And wherever it has been tried, not in the dim or distorted way that nominal and unfaithful disciples offer, but after the example of Christ Himself and in the power of His own Spirit, the wilderness and the solitary place have everywhere been glad for His messengers' coming, and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose.

He of whom we have tried to write 'was manifested to put away sin'. What has Zarathushtra to say about sin? It has already been made plain that he emphatically set it down in its beginning to an impulse from without, and that he taught it consisted in a wrong choice, freely made within the soul, between good and evil in thought as well as in word and deed. The adequacy of this account naturally depends on the view taken of 'wrong'. The Gathas do not within their scanty limits enlighten us, except in the immense stress they lay on the summing up of all evil in Falsehood. It is exactly the correlative of what we have seen was the positive centre of revelation. God is Truth and Justice, and Evil is what is false and unequal. As before, we feel that Christianity takes us deeper into the heart of things by declaring that God is Love—which carries Truth and Right with it—and therefore Evil is before all things lack of Love. A distinct, but not adequately clear and pre-eminent, foreshadowing of this might be traced in the epithets of two Spirits, Friendly and Hostile

(*spenta* and *angra*[1]). On the point forced upon us by these names we may begin our comparison of the religions.

John Wilson's polemic against Parsi doctrine, as dualistic, had a curious effect, the consequences of which he hardly seems to realize. He was so keen on the refutation of the impious doctrine that Good and Evil were equal and co-eternal, the universe a great chess-board on which White and Black pieces of identical powers fought for victory with the result quite open, that he never thought of drawing the Parsis on from their supposed error to the Christian truth that had clearly some elements in common. As we know, an understanding of the Gathas would have shown him that the game has a foregone conclusion. It is a problem—'White to play, and mate in so many millenniums'.[2] The millenniums are a Magian addition, for Zarathushtra's enthusiasm saw the checkmate very near. But in other respects Early and Later Zoroastrianism are entirely at one in their optimism. Wilson was especially moved by the doctrine that the devil could create material objects that are not in themselves evil. It is not our doctrine, and yet we feel no difficulty about making the devil create moral evil: the Parsi might fairly retort that the creations of Ahriman might all be looked at from a moral point of view. Night, for instance, might connote what is purely neutral, a new turn of Nature's kaleidoscope, and capable of suggesting to the poet's thought such revelations as appear in Blanco White's famous sonnet. Or it may connote what is evil, as in the great Johannine saying that 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all'—a passage Wilson forgot when he castigated the Parsis for making darkness Ahrimanian! What is much more to the point is the most important question whether evil in our minds is really generated or fostered by a spiritual power of evil, not ourselves. Here, curiously enough, Wilson drove the Parsi apologists into a doctrine of which presumably he disapproved

[1] *E. Z.*, 135 ff.

[2] As Mrs E. W. Maunder wittily expressed it: see *E. Z.*, p. 402.

about equally. They began to explain Ahriman away, as a mere personification of evil tendencies in man. It is a view common to-day among Reformers. Thus Mr H. J. Bhabha in an address already quoted:[1]

> When the fundamental beliefs are formulated, it will be seen how singularly free from all dogmas the Zoroastrian creed is. The one dogma which is often hurled at the heads of Zoroastrians by the enemies of our faith, namely, the doctrine of two independent self-created deities—Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu—continually fighting with each other, is not accepted by the best exponents of our faith, these opposing so-called deities being only the good and evil motives or feeling in our mind, which are opposed to each other, before a man endowed with free will decides in favour of the good motives and bases his action upon them alone. If this dogma is discarded, there is nothing like a dogma left in the articles of our faith.

The dissipation of Ahriman into a mere metaphor fits in with an inclination frequently found among Christian thinkers to-day. It may be seriously questioned whether the difficulty which prompts it deserves the weight that is laid on it. There is, of course, no sort of objective evidence that we can call in. Psychology may find adequate explanations of the rise of evil in the soul, without going beyond its own history and surroundings. The New Testament tells us that every man is tempted by his own longing for what the moral law forbids, a longing that draws him away and ensnares him.[2] But we do not find precisely similar accounts of good impulses inconsistent with belief in Him 'from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed'. We recognize that the Spirit of God does not influence us from outside, as men influence one another by argument and appeal. He works within by processes so intimately linked with our own complex human nature that we cannot tell where the Divine and the human divide. If there is a power of evil outside us, it must work in a similar way, being spiritual. To deny the

[1] The fourth Zoroastrian Conference. Address of the President, Mr H. J. Bhabha, M.A.

[2] James $1^{14}$.

existence of beings higher than ourselves in range of development is very arbitrary; and there is nothing unreasonable in the conception of spirits which, like ourselves, have had the momentous privilege of free choice between good and evil. Why is it judged incredible among us if some of them made the wrong choice? Of evidence concerning this there can be none, except the intuitions of men in whom the spiritual faculties are most highly developed. Applying this test, we cannot refuse most respectful attention to the instinct of Zarathushtra. If we question his belief in the personality of the evil spirit, we must do the same with his doctrine of the Good, for he uses identical language of both. Spenishta Mainyu chose Right, 'he that clothes him with the massy heavens as with a garment'.[1] In the same verse the spirit of Falsehood 'chose doing the worst things'. It is highly arbitrary to make one of these personal, and the other one a metaphor. For us the question is surely settled by the intuition of genius. That He treated disease of mind and body as due to subordinate spirits of evil only means that in a matter of scientific diagnosis He accepted the beliefs of His time. But when in Peter's well-meant exclamation, 'Mercy on thee, Lord! *this* will never come to thee,' He recognized the prompting of 'Satan', or assigned to that source the impulse to use in the wilderness miraculous power for His own needs and for startling the world into obedience to His claim, are we really to reject His diagnosis as wrong, or dissolve it into a metaphor? In the realm of spiritual truth it was a very serious peril to use unwarranted metaphor in addressing a people already too much given to beliefs in devils: if there is really no prince of the devils, and Jesus knew it, His concession to popular error was perilous. That He did *not* know, and cherished a delusion on so momentous a subject, is incredible. The absolute reality of His manhood that He took upon Him, for delivering man, compels us to admit that He left behind in Heaven the omniscience that would have

[1] *Ys.* 30[5]: see above, p. 28.

told Him who wrote a Psalm, or what causes curvature of the spine. But that He mistook the suggestion of His own mind for a prompting by the prince of ill is absolutely incredible. We must have extremely good reasons before we reject His authority on things like these!

Reverting to the subject on which Wilson's criticism was based, we come to the Ahriman of the later Avesta. We have already noticed that his attack was based on mistaken premisses with reference to the equality and co-eternity of Spenta and Angra Mainyu. The Zervanites, who made the Two Spirits twin children of 'Eternity', never really came within Parsi orthodoxy. Zarathushtra himself only called them 'Twins' on the basis of a logical necessity: the thought of Good suggests its opposite perforce, and we can hardly define Good without reference to it. The true weakness of the Later Avestan doctrine of evil is very different: it is the belittling of evil that is apparent there. It is the inevitable Nemesis of the growth of ritual. When men became accustomed to lay extreme stress on punctilious observation of ceremony, and attribute occult powers to formulae and hymns correctly chanted, there is a consequent change in the view of right and wrong. New sins come into being, unconcerned with ethics, and the perspective of conduct is changed. Now in the Later Avesta we find that holy words, the *Ashem Vohu* and the *Ahuna Vairya* especially, are most 'fiend-smiting'. The priests never stopped to think that if Ahriman was so easily routed, he must be a feeble sort of devil after all! The devout Parsi might reply that he repeats the spells not as mere magic, but as carrying protective thoughts from the treasury of Truth. He might remind us that we sing,

> When evil thoughts molest,
> With this I shield my breast,—
> May Jesus Christ be praised!

and again

> 'Jesus!' the Name high over all
> In hell, or earth, or sky,
> Angels and men before it fall,
> And devils fear and fly.

Quite so, and if ever the singer imagines himself using a mere spell, instead of calling to his help a mighty Person, the Christian is open to the same condemnation. But unhappily with the coming of Theosophy the endemic Indian idea of the *mantram*, already triumphant in the Later Avesta,[1] has been fitted with a new 'scientific' justification. The vibrations in the air set up by the holy words have power to destroy evil. Parsis must choose. If this purely materialistic view of the action of the formulae is adopted, the other must go; and evil becomes a thing which mere mechanical processes can destroy. Against such a view of sin Christianity raises its most emphatic protest. Sin is not the omission of some petty detail in a rite, or the breach of a priestly commandment. How can men think that the great God cares for any worship but that of the sincere heart? God enacts no precise and elaborate rules to stiffen our communion with Him: we might as well force a set speech and gesture on a little child sitting upon his father's knee. Earthly courts are full of minute ceremonial, by which the aloofness which heightens reverence for a symbolic institution is increased. And yet the King of England wins his people's loyalty most when he breaks all rules of etiquette and greets some humble subject as a man. No prophet ever invented ceremonial. It has its place, if only it is kept in its place; but to make breaches of priest-made ceremonial into sin, on a level with breaches of moral law, is debasing the currency of religious language.

Zarathushtra himself stands incomparably nearer to the New Testament. Evil is for him a deadly enemy, to be fought with unwearied earnestness and the weapon of pure thought, word, and deed. He has therefore grasped something of the Christian law which makes sin a much deeper evil than the mere acting, saying, or thinking what is wrong. All through the New Testament sin is mainly the failure to achieve a positive command, the categorical imperative of love. He who neglects an opportunity of feeding the hungry,

[1] Pp. 60, 89 ff.

caring for the stranger, the diseased, the prisoner, is a *sinner*, though he kept from his youth all the 'Thou shalt not' of the moral law. And that is why if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us! England has no room for citizens who, when their country is fighting for the bare existence of civilization, content themselves with correct conduct, and boast they are no traitors. She calls in every one to 'do his bit', as the homely phrase goes. And even so, when God's world which He loves, for which He sent His only Son, is 'lying in the Evil One', He needs no blameless people—

> Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null.

He will not invite such 'righteous', who are not spurred on by their heartache of repentance from dead works to devote all life to a passion of obedient well-doing. It is among the 'sinners' that He finds men who will enlist in His army of salvation, and in their millions they flock to His banner.

Here lies the essence of the charge that Christ lays against the self-satisfaction of those who neglect their duty to the world. The modern followers of the Prophet who 'longed to convert all mankind' keep their Treasure rigidly to themselves. They are very proud of it, and the burnishing of their gold occupies their time and their enthusiasm. But never is one coin of it doled out to relieve the spiritual poverty around them. They themselves complain of the 'lack of spiritual food' from which they suffer; and devout Parsis of both parties are lamenting solely the materialism and apathy that afflicts the deeper interests of their religion. If they would only seek to learn from the principles and the experience of Christianity! We have suffered from like deadness more than once in the history of Christendom, and the revival has always been associated with a passion for telling out our Gospel far and wide. It is a central principle of spiritual life that its gifts are only preserved by flinging them away.

> There was a man—the world did count him mad—
> The more he gave away, the more he had.

Let Parsis realize that their Treasure was meant for the world, and then it will multiply in their hands beyond all thought. But if they continue to bury their talent instead of trading with the same, they will meet with the fate of all 'unprofitable' servants who have received a great trust from God and kept it to themselves.

'Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuses you, even Moses, on whom you have set your hope.' So the Johannine Christ speaks to the Jews; and with the substitution of Zarathushtra's name for that of Moses, even so would He speak to the Parsis to-day. There are so many things in which the Law of Zarathushtra should be for his people the preparation for a new and greater life. From him they might learn a far deeper sense of sin, and a new vision of duty. If only they were willing to forget their absorption in the fear of enlarging their own caste, and could catch their Founder's enthusiasm for humanity, they might experience an amazing revival in their own community life. They have contributed more than their share of public men, benefactors of India, men who have been fired with high ideals for uplifting the masses of the people. But as to their religion, they positively shrink from hearing it praised, lest haply the encomiast should be going on to urge that they share the gift with others. Christianity, which only lives by perpetually giving away its treasure, calls to the possessors of a doctrine of God that India has never matched, to join in bringing to the people the news that God is good. And alas! the heirs of Zarathushtra still make the great refusal.

> I hear the reapers singing go
> Into God's harvest; I, that might
> With them have chosen, here below
> Grope shuddering at the gates of night.

May God yet save them from that outer darkness!

The thought of Zarathushtra as one set to act as his people's παιδαγωγὸς εἰς Χριστόν, their leader on the Bethlehem road, calls us to the question of his teaching for the individual

sinner. We put in an earlier chapter a problem to which we promised to return, and it is fundamental. In the extreme case of the Penitent Robber on Calvary, we heard the dying Christ challenge the whole principle on which Zarathushtra's system depends. The doctrine of the weighing of every man's merits and demerits before the Bridge makes forgiveness of sin impossible. The sinner who repents can only begin to accumulate merit as best he can: his salvation depends on the opportunities he may get for making up the balance. It is quite easy to make a very plausible case for this; and the crucified brigand's winning of Paradise can be easily set down as a cheapening of heaven. And yet Zarathushtra himself supplies the hint of the answer which Christianity returns with full assurance of faith. Is it not a man's Self (*Daena*) which is to be his ultimate reward or retribution?[1] If the determining factor should be the ultimate condition of that Self, when the thoughts, words, and deeds of a lifetime have come to harvest in an hour, it is quite false to assume that the man whose case we have taken as typical suddenly reversed his whole past in an hour, in the very agonies of death. Apocryphal legends are symbolically true when they invent past episodes in the brigand's life in which he played a good, and his impenitent fellow sufferer an evil, part. No man whose whole life had been vile could have risen in an instant into nobility. The chain of cause and effect, on which the East meditates continually, was not broken in this or in any other case. The last decision for Good, even though deferred till the hour of doom was all but striking, was the resultant of forces that had been acting through a lifetime.

Now the teaching of Jesus is centred on this very truth which Zarathushtra divined in his new conception of the *Daena* that makes heaven or hell. If only he could have afforded to sacrifice the inherited doctrine of the weighing of merits and demerits, he might have made far more of his great idea. For the two are really incongruous when we pursue them to

[1] See above, p. 36.

their logical issue; and the weighing, superficially sound though it be, soon brings our whole conception of a last judgement of perfect justice upon individual lives into a hopeless tangle. The Self or Soul,[1] developing under Divine influence for the unimagined possibilities of the boundless Future, is the centre of the thought of Jesus; and we may claim that Zarathushtra caught something of the transcendence of that thought. Perhaps he would never have allowed the other line to cross it, had not the inherited idea of the weighing of merits and demerits appeared to promise a fruitful solution for the problem of the winning of victory for Good in the world as a whole.

The thought of the cultivation of the Self, to take its appointed place in the universal development of creation, seems to supply an answer, so far as our limited powers can take us into the mystery, to the questions that are so insistently asked both in East and West. Men are perplexed by the inequality of service and reward. 'Short toil, eternal rest,' a few years of good life rewarded by an eternity of bliss—is this Divine Justice? Is it not more in accord with Right that the merit should be exhausted in time and the soul come back into earthly life, no doubt 'trailing clouds of glory' from heaven which has been its home, to win a renewal, a longer lease this time? To this we may now reply that the analogy of Nature, since the new impulse given to our knowledge by Charles Darwin, has taught us of an upward movement everywhere, every species having before it the unconscious aim, as it were, of development into something more advanced. It accords with the whole scheme of the world, as we see it, to believe that the supreme purpose of the cosmic process is the perfecting of individual beings in relation to their immediate environment and to the universe. This is far more worthy, surely, of a great World-Mind than the conception of God as pre-eminently a Judge, ever busy dispensing strict justice to

[1] It should be remembered that ἑαυτόν and ψυχήν are interchanged in the same great saying: Luke $9^{25}$ uses the former, Mark $8^{36}$ and Matthew $16^{26}$ the latter.

His creatures. We cannot exclude that conception from our thoughts of Him; and indeed the ultimate to many problems that we are forced to give up is couched in terms of it. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' But the very analogy of human life teaches us not to regard this as the chief element in the picture we form of Deity. The vast majority of us never enter a law-court. It stands behind us as a safeguard for our rights when assailed, and it is a pillar of the fabric of society. But weigh the word 'judge', or even 'king', against the word 'father' or 'mother', and we see at once how impossible is any comparison. Must not the function of God as the universal Parent, concerned supremely with the perfecting of His family and every member in it, take its place as incomparably the highest and truest of which our minds can conceive?

If that is true, and the ultimate purpose of God is attained by the perfecting of every man, as a free agent, for the work of ministering to the social organism in which he finds himself, we may dismiss the idea of merit as establishing a claim on God for reward. Good thoughts, words, and deeds are not so many golden coins the accumulation of which will enable us to purchase a mansion with the blest. They are the fruits of a tree that has been carefully planted, watered, grafted, pruned, that it may become the very best that the gardener's patience and skill can raise. And that is a fair inference from Zarathushtra's teaching of the *Daena*. Nay more, it survives in that gem of the Later Avesta which pictures the *Daena* as coming on the wings of a fragrant south wind to meet the good man's soul, and to reveal that her fairness has grown with every good thought, word, and deed of his life. May not the orthodox Zoroastrian regard that as the pivot of his Founder's teaching, and take the Weighing as a parable which conveys profound important but not primary truth? It would answer fairly to the forensic metaphor by which Paul strove to make clear one aspect of the Atonement. The overstraining of the metaphor has done harm to Christian theology

quite comparable with the harm done to Zoroastrianism by the stress laid on the principle of the Weighing.

We may take this inquiry a little further, to bring out the light Christianity throws on the mystery on the confines of which we are timidly moving. The most illuminating passage in the teaching of Jesus on this subject is His parable of the Pounds.[1] It compares this life to the activity of slaves set by their absent master to petty shop-keeping on a capital of some fifty rupees. One makes his fifty into five hundred, a second into two hundred and fifty. A third thinks the task impossible, and does not believe it possible to please his exacting master: he guards his capital carefully and brings it back intact but unimproved. On the master's return, the slaves find to their amazement that he cared nothing for the money—he lets the two diligent slaves keep theirs, and adds to the treasure of the first the money the lazy slave had returned. He was testing them all the time for the task of ruling cities. The man who brought ten coins for the one entrusted to him suddenly rises from the position of a slave to that of a ruler of ten cities: his less successful comrade gets five. And the third, who refused his opportunity through idleness and distrust of his master, remains a slave still. When we look at *Dašapurarāja* in his new splendour we get a vision of the immensity of life in the Hereafter. God is training us in the trivial round and testing us for vast responsibilities. They constitute a 'reward', of course, but that is not their chief feature. The King's Government has to be carried on, and He deigns to need our service therein. He who proves his devotion and capacity in the small sphere of this life will be promoted to unthinkably greater responsibility in the great world of which we can form none but the vaguest conception. But many of our sorest perplexities are solved by this new view. If our earthly life is only a testing and a training, we need not wonder why there are so many 'premature' withdrawals of bright and promising lives. God does not need the

[1] Luke $19^{11-27}$.

time we need to test a character, nor does He take our view of the importance of a post to which He has set us. Only He can know whether service here or service yonder is better for any individual for the supreme interests of His Kingdom.

We may go further, and point out that when once the radically false idea of merit and reward has been eliminated from our picture of God's dealings with us in the Hereafter, and the thought of punishment for the past merged in the higher ideal of a Divine working out of what is best for the community and the individual, we have a very wide range of possibility left for the solution of questions which the East insistently urges. The essential evil of its own favourite solution, which so many Parsis are adopting with or without attempt to square it with their scriptures, does not lie in *punarjanma* itself. Popular Christian thought, and even that of deeper inquiry, has ignored too much the conceivable implications of the word *sleep* in the New Testament outline. 'Those who were laid to rest through Jesus'[1] were not merely left to the kindly ministry of 'Nature's sweet restorer', to recover energy for new work 'after life's fitful fever'. In a world where Time is not, in a sleep where God's healing processes may have unlimited scope without delaying the conscious fruition of that great Reunion for which so many of us are living in hope, God may set the soul in new environments to further its training on the sides where it is weakest. That there must be further training is obvious enough. The soul at best leaves this life only partially trained, and we cannot expect to know yet where God will find the environments that each one needs. But we may learn from our knowledge of His dealing with us here a central fact of His eternal task as Father of His creatures. He is before all things busying Himself with the higher stages of an endless development, which began countless ages ago in the protoplasm and will end in nothing short of the fullness of the stature of

[1] 1 Thess. $4^{14}$ : see the writer's *Grammar of N. T. Greek*, I, p. 162.

Christ. The destructive heresy is to dream that God can ever be vindictive in punishment, or can allow blessings to be extorted from Him by merit: when we have done our utmost, we have only done what was our duty. When once such fatal misapprehensions are gone, we may leave reverent speculation to picture the possibilities so far as may be found helpful, only provided that we do not waste in guessing an explanation of the world the energies which are needed for redeeming it.

One thing however is plain, and on that we cannot exercise our thought too strenuously. Indian religious speculation has launched into deep mysteries of the way in which the Grace of God acts upon us. Christianity welcomes and extends indefinitely all efforts to realize more clearly the manifold and infinite operations of that Grace which sets itself to find an avenue of approach to every human heart. We picture Perfect Knowledge as aiming at the Achilles' heel of the sinner who has made himself all but invulnerable against the gracious wounds of Eternal Love. Somewhere in the complex nature of every man there is a place where Good may get its footing. It is the supreme task of our humanity to find it in our most hopeless fellow men. We draw our bow at a venture, and sometimes it is guided by a wisdom that is not ours to the joints of the harness through which it may reach the heart. God never needs to search thus blindly. He knew—to return to our former typical example—where was the spot in that dying robber's heart that could be reached by sovran grace in its mightiest working, even though the man's whole past may have been irredeemably vile to all human seeming. And that wonderful new tide of understanding flooded a soul that was just winging its way into the Unseen. It found itself in Paradise. So did Adam in the primeval story. May this Paradise also have been 'Lost' after all? Our warrant for hope lies in the word 'with Me'. Whatever befell the infant believer there, 'put to sleep through Jesus' his Deliverer, and in that sleep by ways we cannot know healed of his sin and started on an upward calling, we may be

confident that the Good Shepherd knew how to guide that hardly rescued sheep into a fold of peace in the end.

And the other man, on whose hard and impenitent heart the very sight of the Lamb of God bearing away the sin of the world made no impression—did the victorious Grace ever reach him, when he opened his eyes on a new scene? We cannot tell: it is not given us to know the mysteries. Only we know that He who died loved even him.

It is tempting to follow the leading doctrines of Zoroastrianism in this manner step by step, to show how Christ fulfils each partial truth, seals with His authority every clear and forceful utterance of prophetic intuition, and crowns every aspiration after God. It must suffice to take one, the Doctrine of Prayer. The Parsis, outwardly at any rate, are a praying people. The duty of public and private prayer is well understood and insisted upon. There are a great many of them with whom prayer is a regular practice and the source of a true spiritual life. It may be useful to quote from a manuscript paper by an orthodox Parsi who assured the writer that he did not *think*, he *knew*, that God instantly answers prayer. The main purpose of the paper is controversial, but this part is also practical:

> Prayer in a language other than one's vernacular need not be mere show and sham, nor need it be a parrot's prattle. It is the heart that prays more than the brain. Moreover, even the most unintelligent and illiterate amongst the devotees understands that he seeks God, thanks Him, expresses his gratitude for the good He has done him, solicits for his daily and future needs, and desires to live a life of purity and righteousness. That much of right understanding is enough to furnish the intellectual requisite needed to impress and awaken the heart, and the awakening heart can do the rest. So much for the entirely illiterate and unintelligent. Their proportion in the present Parsi community is exceedingly small, nay almost *nil* for all practical purposes. The community at large can be made to understand the meaning and substance of the prayers in common use, and as a matter of fact the great majority of them do understand that. The advocates of reformed prayer have been saying an untruth when they denounce the orthodox form of prayer as parrot's prattle, since they cannot be unaware of the fact that most

people do understand the meaning and substance of the prayers they offer. Moreover, we have 'Monajats' or supplementary prayers in Gujarati to be uttered alongside with the original prayers, to meet the intellectual function of prayer which some people over-rate, simply because they overlook the emotional function. I have no objection to the Monajats being used alongside with the original prayers, and I do not know of a single orthodox Zoroastrian having objected to such use.

The writer of these words, who is a medical man, proceeds next to explain how 'the ancient Aryans believed in the mysterious power of sound exercised by its influencing the rate of vibration in adjacent objects'. The influence of music on the mind and heart is dwelt on: we might offer a contribution by referring to David's harp and Saul's mania. Hence 'it is not difficult to understand that the influence of a prayer upon the mind and heart depends not merely upon the thought thereby conveyed to the mind, but also upon the form in which that thought is presented, the language in which it is clothed'. Readers must judge for themselves as to the scientific value of this line of argument. It may just be observed that the priests chant the Gathic prayers with a pronunciation that sets the written texts at defiance,[1] the admitted result of generations of repetition by men who do not understand the original. The fact appears to complicate a theory which can hardly be said to commend itself strongly to our reason. One further quotation may be offered from this paper:

Although I am opposed to Gujarati poems composed by incompetent people being substituted for our original prayers, and am in favour of continuing to pray as usual, taking care to understand the meaning or at least the purport of each prayer, and supplementing them with, not replacing them by, the existing Monajats that have been written by pious men far superior to the modern reformers and their scribes in moral grandeur, I am strongly in favour of learning by heart and reciting in moments of leisure and in the spare seconds during the time of work whenever the mind may wander or remain vacant, any poem or phrase expressing some great thought in the beautiful form that may happen to fit in with the higher aspiration and emotion of that particular period

[1] The two are compared in Dhalla, *Zor. Theol.*, p. 345, and above, p. 188.

of life. I have used different poems and phrases at different periods of my life and found them very useful. At one period of my life the Universal prayer of Pope,

> 'If I am right, Thy grace impart,
> Still in the right to stay.
> If I am wrong, oh! teach my heart
> To know the better way'

fitted me very well. At another time the beautiful lines of Wordsworth,

> 'Give unto me made lowly wise,
> The spirit of self-sacrifice,
> The confidence of reason give,
> And in the light of truth, thy bondman let me live'

fitted me best. At another time the grand Christian prayer 'Peace on earth, good-will to man' was the chief prayer on my lip as it is now in my heart. In short, the *language* of prayer is not the question at issue with me; it is the form that weighs with me, and the source as well, since the form depends upon and varies with the source.

If it is right to judge a religion by its best, we have before us the materials for a fair estimate. It would only be necessary to ask what prospects there are of the prevalence of real prayer among the masses of the community. Adoration of angels, petition for material benefits, extremely frequent repetition of ancient prayers the 'purport' of which is more or less understood—and Dr Daji's words just quoted are much more optimist here than those of other competent witnesses—does the system promise to build up a really spiritual community, under the ordinary conditions of human nature? Be it remembered that religious instruction, in any adequate sense of the term, is unknown.[1] Parsis with a strong religious bent will exercise it, and will find out by instinct and meditation how to draw near to God. But all experience tells us that it is very easy to say prayers, and very hard to pray, and even with the purest examples and the most favourable environment true prayer is only achieved by constant striving. What prospect is there of any widespread success among such a

[1] But see above, p. 168.

people as the Parsis of to-day, as described by themselves? Their only shepherding, alas! consists in a very high fence and a well-guarded door, should any hungry sheep try to go out and find the pasture he cannot find within.

The reader has had numerous samples of the prayers presented to him in the body of this book, and can judge as well as any outsider can of their calibre from a spiritual point of view. The qualification must in fairness be kept carefully in mind. The power of association is so great that words which to us appear tame and unsatisfying, though wholly free from blame, may have unaccountable influence on minds which are under the spell of the centuries. The Reformers would sweep this 'parrot's prattle' away, as we have just seen. Before they do so for themselves, or urge on others to follow, they ought to be very sure they have something genuine to put in its place.

Christians will have no hesitation in offering help to the Parsi who feels, as so many do, the spiritual poverty of his people, for all their heritage of hoarded wealth. How great a blessing would it bring them if they could turn to One who knows, and cry 'Lord, teach us to pray, as Zarathushtra also taught his disciples'! There are some aspects of prayer in which the best types of Eastern piety may help the Western seeker to realize ideals conspicuous in the New Testament. That prayer is not only or even chiefly petition, but the concentrated effort to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and to hear what God will speak, is a lesson that the East should not find it so hard to learn as we often do. What Jesus taught about prayer is so clear and so well known that it hardly need be repeated: we will only recall those parts of His teaching in which special dangers of the Parsi conception and practice are anticipated. The peril of using words without thoughts was vividly pictured in the Sermon on the Mount; and the Parsi system of very frequent prayer in formulae that are constantly repeated brings obviously its danger of expecting to be 'heard for much speaking'. That

prayer is centrally a submission, and a glad submission, to a Higher Will: that it exercises a spiritual force which God can direct in His own way to be an instrument in the achieving of His purpose: that it depends for the measure of its success upon the measure of trust in a Father's love: that it is paralysed by artificiality, by selfishness, by doubt: and that its action is most perfectly understood by our realizing that prayer which is answered by God is first inspired by God—all this we may learn from the teaching and example of Jesus, and from the interpretations of Jesus which come to us from the circle of His first followers. When all of us, Christian and non-Christian, have learned to use our unrealized prayer resources, even up to the limited measure of our best knowledge and highest intuitions, the coming of the Kingdom will not be far away.

Our survey is at an end, and the conclusion of the whole matter should be clear. The Parsis themselves being witness, the possession of a high ideal of religion in the Gathas has not availed to make them a religious people. 'All observers remark the indifference of our educated young men to our ancient religion,' says Mr Bhabha,[1] who feels 'the imperative need of a religious revival'. Says a sympathetic outsider: 'Parsi Society is rapidly moving towards the modern life of unbelief and excitement and the mad pursuit of wealth and pleasure. Few care for such time-worn virtues as brotherly love and communal sympathy, which were characteristics of the generation which is now disappearing'.[2] With this confession that the community has lost its religious earnestness, and with it so many of the virtues that men look back to as flourishing in an older day, we have evidences of a yearning for things better and holier. One who, like the writer, has addressed many Parsi congregations in different parts of India

[1] In the address referred to above (p. 174), p. 13.
[2] Jogendra Singh, B. M. Malabari, p. 82 (1914).

can witness to the gladness with which multitudes of them hear, even from a Christian, appeals to be more worthy of their heritage. Nor do they resent the Christian speaker's plea that their own Prophet and the act of their own Magi in the olden time point unmistakably to Christ as the Crown of their ancient faith. He has been set before them as the only hope of a community which for all its gifts, and the superiority of its religion to those of its neighbours, 'is apparently falling to pieces', as Mr Bhabha puts it. But they will not yet come to Him. One more quotation from Malabari will express their attitude:

> And how much do we owe to Christian Missionaries? We are indebted to them for the first start in the race of intellectual emancipation. It is to them that we are beholden for some of our most cherished political and social acquisitions. Our very Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and Prarthna Samaj are the offshoots in one sense of this beneficent agency. And apart from its active usefulness, the Christian Mission serves as a buffer for the tide of scepticism, usually inseparable from intellectual emancipation. At a time when doubt and distrust are taking the place of reasoned inquiry among the younger generation of India, I feel bound to acknowledge in my own person the benefits I have derived from contact with the spirit of Christianity. But for that holy contact, I could scarcely have grown into the staunch and sincere Zoroastrian that I am, with a keen appreciation of all that appeals readily to the intelligence, and a reverent curiosity for what appeals to the heart, knowing full well that much of what is mysterious to men is not beneath, but beyond, the comprehension of a finite being.[1]

And we who know how perfectly Christ can satisfy all the realized and unrealized needs of this people—and know it because He has satisfied all these and more in our own lives, wherever we have yielded to Him—we can only go on pleading His sufficiency for the crowning and completing of a religion which for all its high qualities has failed in its mission. It has failed to satisfy even the small community which jealously

[1] Op. cit., p. 40 f.

keeps it to itself, failed more conspicuously in the duty of giving to the world a message which its Founder would fain have proclaimed everywhere. It is cold and cheerless, and brings no comfort and no inspiration. And all the time we can hear the 'majestic instancy' of a Voice that calls them still. Their priests heard it long ago, and came with gifts and exceedingly great joy to see the Babe in the manger who was the God of 'Endless Time'. And now the Voice calls their forwandered successor, 'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me'. It is still as it was of old: 'Ye search your Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life. And these are they which bear witness of Me, and ye will not come to Me that ye might have life.'

For what India needs, and all the world needs, is not a Teacher, nor even an Example, but a Life. The world has had plenty of teachers, with much, very much, of lofty, pure, and beautiful truth to tell. Of all the teachers of the Gentiles none has risen higher than Zarathushtra: only partially have any of them risen as high. The conspicuous failure of this great religion speaks eloquently of the supreme need of man. Vital energy, not precepts; power, not mere example; grace, not ideals—this is what our Christ gives, what every other messenger of God can only promise through Him. He lived our human life perfectly, crowned His human obedience with the death to which men turn for life, and now He offers to each of us that life of the God-Man, to be lived again within us, that we may be able at last to do in His strength the things that we would fain do, but have always failed apart from Him. In the Cross of Christ is the love of God made manifest, and by its power the weak are everywhere made strong. 'Lord, to whom shall we go? *Thou* hast words of eternal life.'

A traveller from England, now within a few days of departure from the continent where he has 'seen the cities of many folk and learnt their mind', recalls with hope and thankfulness the parable written in the sky when in the early dawn he

caught his first glimpse of India. A waning crescent moon hung over the harbour of Bombay and faintly illuminated the beautiful city that slept upon its shore. The borrowed radiance faded as the dawn drew on, and vanished, not destroyed but outshone, as the great sun leapt into the sky. Even so, and sooner perhaps than we have dared to hope, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise on India, with healing in His wings.

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